



# EDUCATION



This EDUCATION CHAPTER explains the different options available for pursuing your education whether you are currently incarcerated, preparing for your release, or have been formerly incarcerated. It also explains the options of student aid and funding in order to pursue your educational goals.

**DISCLAIMER - YOUR RESPONSIBILITY WHEN USING THIS GUIDE:** When putting together the *Roadmap to Reentry: A South Carolina Legal Guide*, we did our best to give you useful and accurate information. However, the laws change frequently and are subject to differing interpretations. We do not always have the resources to make changes to this informational material every time the law changes. If you use information from the *Roadmap to Reentry* legal guide, it is *your responsibility* to make sure that the law has not changed and applies to your particular situation. If you are incarcerated, most of the materials you need should be available in your institution's law library. The *Roadmap to Reentry* guide is not intending to give legal advice, but rather legal information. No attorney-client relationship is created by using any information in this guide. You should always consult your own attorney if you need legal advice specific to your situation.



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#### WHAT WILL I LEARN IN THE EDUCATION CHAPTER?

- The different educational options
- How to set up your educational goals
- How to assess your current educational level
- The different educational levels/programs and what you need to pursue them
- How your incarceration and criminal record might affect your educational goals
- Options to pay for your education



# I. INTRODUCTION

## WHAT WILL I LEARN?

- A basic overview of your educational options
- What you need to get started in pursuing your education

Getting an education is one of the most important steps you can take in reentry if it feels right to you. Education can open up new opportunities and lead to a better career. This chapter can help you start (or continue) to plan for and reach your educational goals. It covers what programs, schools, and financial aid opportunities are available, and it takes you through the process of deciding what is right for you. The advice here is intended to be practical both for people who are currently incarcerated, as well as for people who were formerly incarcerated and have returned to the community.

**A NOTE FOR READERS WHO ARE CURRENTLY INCARCERATED:** Throughout this chapter, we will often suggest that you “call” the resource that you need. We understand that it might not be possible for you to make these phone calls yourself while you are incarcerated, however we offer it as general information for you, your family, and your advocates to use for your benefit.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Studies show that formerly incarcerated people who receive general education or vocational training are much less likely to return to prison and much more likely to find employment after their release. In fact, people who participate in correctional education programs while incarcerated have a 43 percent *lower* chance of returning to prison, and a 13 percent *higher* chance of finding employment, than people who do not.<sup>1</sup>

## QUESTIONS TO START WITH

Thinking through the following questions will help you set your educational goals and decide which path is best for you.

### WHAT ARE MY EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS?

Your decision about which school or program you enroll in will depend on many factors: your personal and career goals, your finances, your educational background and current skills, and your ability to overcome any barriers that may arise because of your criminal history. Your decision may also depend on day-to-day needs—such as your health, family responsibilities, access to transportation, and parole or probation conditions.

To start, here is an overview of the educational options this Chapter will cover:

- **Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes** improve your basic math, reading, writing, and life skills; and these classes can help you get ready for high school-level work.
- **High School Credentials (diploma or GED)** are a minimum requirement for many jobs, and are a necessary step before you can continue your education through a Career Technical Education program or a college or university degree. You can earn a high school credential by completing a high school diploma program or passing the GED test.
- **Career Technical Education (CTE) programs** train you for specific kinds of jobs, and sometimes lead to certificates or professional/occupational licenses that you need for those jobs. Different programs take different lengths of time, but they’re often designed so that you can complete them in 1 year.
- **College Degree:** Two-year and four-year colleges and universities award college degrees (also called academic degrees) for completing a program of academic study. College degree programs usually do not train you for a specific type of job, but give you a wide variety of general skills that are useful for many different professions. The different types of college (academic) degrees are: associate’s and bachelors.
  - **Two-year college (associate degree) programs** allow you to earn an associate degree, which can be a stepping-stone to entry-level jobs or to a four-year college program. Note: Part-time students will take longer than 2 years.
  - **Four-year college and university programs** allow you to earn a bachelor’s degree, which can be a stepping-stone to higher-level jobs or to graduate or professional school. Note: Part-time students will take longer than 4 years.

<sup>1</sup> Allie Bidwell, Report: Prison Education Programs Could Save Money, U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT (Aug. 22, 2013) [www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/08/22/report-prison-education-programs-could-save-money](http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/08/22/report-prison-education-programs-could-save-money); see also CTR. FOR CMT’Y. ALT., The Use of Criminal History Records in College Admissions Reconsidered (2010) (“Post-secondary educational programs have been shown to reduce recidivism by approximately 40 percent. A research brief . . . reported on a Texas study in which participation in higher education lowered recidivism to 15 percent, 13 percent and under 1 percent for people who earned an associate’s, bachelor’s, and master’s degree, respectively. In contrast, the general recidivism rate hovers around 63 percent nationally. A study of recidivism rates among women showed that only 7.7 percent of those who took college courses in prison returned to prison after release, compared to 29.9 percent of those who did not participate in the college program. State-level studies in Texas, California, Alabama, and Maryland have, over the course of many years, shown significant reductions in recidivism associated with higher education in correctional settings.”)



- **Graduate or professional schools** allow you to earn advanced degrees after you've earned a bachelor's degree. Earning a professional degree allows you to become licensed to work in professions like law or medicine; the kinds of jobs it can lead to depends on your field of study. Earning a master's degree generally takes 2 years, and a doctorate degree can take 3 years or more.<sup>2</sup>

## WHAT EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS DO I HAVE WHILE I'M ON PROBATION OR PAROLE?

*It depends.* Once you are released, you will have access to free resources available in the community—including the internet, public libraries, and community service organizations—that can help you do research, apply to schools and programs, and get financial assistance (“financial aid”) to help pay for your education. You may also become eligible (qualify) for more types of financial aid once you are released, which can allow you to consider schools or programs that you otherwise might not be able to afford.

*However,* the educational options available to you ultimately depend on where you live (urban areas tend to have more options), your life circumstances (such as family responsibilities), and any probation or parole conditions that might affect your access to educational programs and services (such as travel restrictions).

**NOTE:** Your parole agent or probation officer should be supportive and encourage you to pursue your educational goals as part of your successful reintegration.<sup>3</sup> If you find that they are not supportive, or that your conditions make it difficult or impossible for you to get an education, contact Root & Rebound's South Carolina reentry email hotline at [southcarolina@rootandrebond.org](mailto:southcarolina@rootandrebond.org) for strategies, information, and support.

### A FEW GREAT RESOURCES:

#### Public Libraries

The local public library is an important gateway to other services and resources in your community. In addition to offering free access to computers and the Internet, libraries often have adult education classes, community calendars (support group meetings, free clinics, etc.), and some government forms that you might need. Librarians are also available to help you find whatever information you need. To find the public library closest to you:

- Check under “library” or “public library” in the city government section of your local phone book;
- Search the Internet for “library” or “public library” along with the name of your city or county; and/or
- You can also search the national database of public libraries provided by the Institute of Museum & Library Services at: [www.ims.gov/research/public\\_libraries\\_in\\_the\\_united\\_states\\_survey.aspx](http://www.ims.gov/research/public_libraries_in_the_united_states_survey.aspx).

#### South Carolina Works (SC Works)

South Carolina Works offers many resources, all in one place, for people seeking a job or more education. Most services are free, but there may be a fee for some specialized education and training programs. Some of the services provided by SC Works include:

- **Skills assessment:** Staff can help you identify the skills you have and the skills you need to be ready for education, training, and/or employment.
- **Career counseling:** Counselors and Job Coaches can help you identify jobs and professions that you might be interested in based on your skills, interests, and experience. They can also tell you about the job market in your local area.
- **Training or referrals to training programs:** Staff may provide direct training or refer you to training programs that can help you prepare to continue your education or enter the workforce.
- **Referrals to other resources or services:** Staff can direct you to organizations that can help you with other needs, such as transportation, child care, welfare assistance, unemployment insurance, and veterans' services.

You can find a South Carolina Works in your area:

- By calling the SCWORKS helpline at 1-803-737-5627 or the U.S. Department of Labor's National Helpline at: 1-877-872-5627.

#### Community Organizations

<sup>2</sup> COLL. BD., *Quick Guide: Your College Degree Options*, [bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/college-101/quick-guide-your-college-degree-options](http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/college-101/quick-guide-your-college-degree-options); NAT'L COLL. TRANSITION NETWORK, *Educational Planning*, [collegeforadults.org](http://collegeforadults.org).

<sup>3</sup> SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS-Re-Entry, [www.doc.sc.gov/programs/reentry\\_resources.html](http://www.doc.sc.gov/programs/reentry_resources.html).



Community organizations provide many kinds of services. Most are free, but some may charge a fee. These organizations can help with employment, education, health care, counseling, housing, substance abuse treatment, transportation, and childcare. They also can provide referrals to other agencies. There are different ways you can find community organizations:

- **2-1-1:** A community information service organized by the South Carolina United Way that connects you to local agencies, services, and organizations that can help you with a variety of needs. To contact 2-1-1:
  - Call 2-1-1 from any phone (note: phone service may not be available in all communities yet);
  - Visit the 2-1-1 Information & Referral Search website [SC211.org](https://www.sc211.org); or
  - Download the SC211 app on your cellular phone.
- **Local Public Library:** Often there will be a community message board with contact information for local organizations, or you can ask the librarian to recommend local resources (see above).

**TIP:** Make a list ready of the resources that you want to research *before* you go to the library. This will save you a lot of time and help you better organize your search. This is especially important if you are under time limitations because of curfews or restrictions imposed by your parole agent or probation officer.

## WHAT EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS DO I HAVE WHILE I'M INCARCERATED?

You have options, but unfortunately your options and the quality of the programs will depend on where you're incarcerated. The programs and resources available to you will be different based on whether you're incarcerated in a federal prison, state prison, or county jail. In addition, the availability of programs and resources will be different across different facilities.<sup>4</sup>

In general, the following programs will be available to you:

- **If you're in a federal prison,** you should have free access to assessment testing, ABE (Adult Basic Education) classes (including literacy and ESL (English as a Second Language)), GED programs,<sup>5</sup> CTE (Career and Technical Education) and job readiness programs,<sup>6</sup> as well as a College Coordinator who can help you enroll in and complete correspondence (mail or online) courses.<sup>7</sup>
- **If you're in a South Carolina state prison,** SCDC provides free access to assessment testing, ABE classes (including literacy and ESL), GED programs, high school diploma programs, CTE and job readiness programs, occupational licensing, library services, and tutoring support programs.<sup>8</sup>
- **If you're incarcerated in a South Carolina county jail,** South Carolina law gives individual counties permission (and resources) to establish educational programs in all adult county correctional facilities and to award diplomas and certificates for completion of study in these programs.<sup>9</sup> However, the law does not require that the counties do so. Also, the law does not control how those programs are to be structured. Therefore, the availability and quality of educational programs varies from county to county.<sup>10</sup> If you are incarcerated in county jail, you will need to check with your facility to see what programs are available to you.

Read more about the different programs that might be available while you are incarcerated in the **section on Learning the Educational Landscape**, starting on **PG. 24**. Even if you don't have access to programs or classes that are right for you while you're incarcerated, there are programs you can complete on your own through correspondence courses, online courses, or self-study, and other practical steps you can take!

- → For information about correspondence, online courses, and self-study courses, see **PG. 40**.
- → For information on preparing for your post-release education while you are incarcerated, see **PG. 10**.

## PRACTICAL TIPS FOR APPLYING TO SCHOOL

The process of pursuing your education—not to mention the larger process of transitioning back into your community—can be rewarding, but also challenging and stressful at times. You'll be dealing with a lot of forms, applications, and procedures, which can feel overwhelming. Here are some tips for staying on track:

<sup>4</sup> Certain programs and resources must be available in correctional facilities according to federal or state law; others are provided according to institutional policies and regulations. See U.S. DEP'T JUSTICE, PROGRAM STATEMENT 1315.07 INMATE LEGAL ACTIVITIES (Nov. 5, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> 18 U.S.C. § 3624(f)(4); 28 C.F.R. pt. 544 subpt. H; U.S. Dep't Justice Fed. Bureau of Prisons, Program Statement 5300.21, Education, Training, and Leisure Time Program Standards (Feb. 18, 2002); U.S. Dep't Justice Fed. Bureau of Prisons, Program Statement 5350.24 English-as-a-Second-Language Program (July 24, 1997); U.S. Dep't Justice, Legal Resource Guide to the Federal Bureau of Prisons (2014) at 19-20.

<sup>6</sup> 28 C.F.R. pt. 544, subpt. D; pt. 5553; U.S. Dep't Justice Fed. Bureau of Prisons, Program Statement 5300.21, Education, Training, and Leisure Time Program Standards (Feb. 18, 2002); U.S. Dep't Justice, Legal Resource Guide to the Federal Bureau of Prisons, 19-20 (2014).

<sup>7</sup> ZOUKIS CONSULTING GROUP, *Prison Educational Consultation*, [prisonerresource.com/prison-consulting-services/prison-problems-advocates/educational-consultation/](https://prisonerresource.com/prison-consulting-services/prison-problems-advocates/educational-consultation/).

<sup>8</sup> South Carolina Dep't of Corr. Inmate Services, [www.doc.sc.gov/programs/inmate.html](http://www.doc.sc.gov/programs/inmate.html).

<sup>9</sup> S.C. Code Ann. § 24-25-10, et seq.

<sup>10</sup> S.C. Code Ann. § 24-25-20.



- **Gather and organize all the documents you will need for applying to schools and programs, financial aid, and employment** (see list on PG. 38). Keep all your important documents together, and use a large envelope or folder to store them. Keeping these papers clean, safe, and organized will save you lots of time and frustration.<sup>11</sup> Getting some of these documents may require lots of paperwork, a long application process, or lots of follow-up efforts, so if you are able to gather these documents as soon as possible, take advantage of this and gather them to save you time. You may often need the same documents for different applications, so making copies is also helpful.
- **Take the time to make informed decisions.** Before committing to any school or program, get as much information as possible and consider your options carefully. Do background research at the library or on the Internet, ask questions to people who have been through the program or know of its reputation, beware of scams and bogus credentials, and investigate ways to save time and money.
- **Ask for help!** Get advice from the people who are there to help you. If you are currently incarcerated, talk to the educational staff, counselors, and program directors at your facility. Ask friends and family members to do research and gather information for you. If you're in the community, visit your local public library and look for re-entry programs, career centers, and community colleges in your area.

## WHAT ARE "IMMUNIZATION/VACCINATION RECORDS" AND WHY DO I NEED THEM?

Your immunization record (also called your vaccination record) is a list of all the vaccines (medicines) you received as a child and as an adult that prevent common diseases like polio, chicken pox, and tuberculosis. This list and these vaccinations are required to register for school, for certain jobs, and/or to travel abroad.

## HOW TO LOCATE YOUR IMMUNIZATION/VACCINATION RECORDS

Unfortunately, there is no national database of immunization/vaccination records. The only records that exist are the documents you or your parents were given when you were vaccinated, and the medical records kept by the doctor or clinic where you were vaccinated.<sup>12</sup> If you need official copies of your immunization/vaccination records, there are several places you can look:<sup>13</sup>

- Ask a parent or guardian if they kept the records of your childhood immunizations/vaccinations;
- Check with your elementary school, high school, and/or college for records of any immunizations (generally, records are kept only for 1-2 years after students leave the school system);
- Check with your correctional facility's health care services department to see if it has kept records of your immunizations/vaccinations;
- Check with previous employers (including the military) that may have required immunizations/vaccinations;
- Check with your doctor (immunization records are kept at doctors' offices for a limited number of years);
- Contact your state's health department. Some states have registries that include adult immunizations/vaccinations.

**NOTE:** South Carolina does have a registry, but it is relatively new (established in 2014), and requires all facilities offering vaccinations to report to the State Registry. For more information, visit: The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) at: [scdhec.gov](http://scdhec.gov); or The South Carolina Immunization Registry at: [scdhec.gov/health-professionals/electronic-health-records-meaningful-use/immunization-registry](http://scdhec.gov/health-professionals/electronic-health-records-meaningful-use/immunization-registry).

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I CAN'T FIND MY IMMUNIZATION/VACCINATION RECORDS?

If you can't find your immunization/vaccination records, you may need to get vaccinated again. While this is not ideal, it is safe to repeat vaccines. Your doctor may also be able to do blood tests to see if you are already immune to certain diseases, if so then you do not have to repeat those vaccinations.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup>See Anna Crayton & Nicole Lindahl, *Back to School A Guide to: Continuing Your Education after Prison*, Prisoner Reentry Institute, John Jay College of Criminal Justice (2010), [www.fullerton.edu/rebound/resources/Crayton%20and%20Lindahl\\_Back%20to%20School%20-%20A%20Guide%20to%20Continuing%20Your%20Education%20after%20Prison.pdf](http://www.fullerton.edu/rebound/resources/Crayton%20and%20Lindahl_Back%20to%20School%20-%20A%20Guide%20to%20Continuing%20Your%20Education%20after%20Prison.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION, *Vaccine Information for Adults: Keeping Your Vaccine Records Up to Date*, [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/vaccination-records.html#record-vacc](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/vaccination-records.html#record-vacc).

<sup>13</sup> CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION, *Vaccine Information for Adults: Keeping Your Vaccine Records Up to Date*, [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/vaccination-records.html#record-vacc](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/vaccination-records.html#record-vacc).

<sup>14</sup> CTRS. FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION, *Vaccine Information for Adults: Keeping Your Vaccine Records Up to Date*, [www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/vaccination-records.html#record-vacc](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/adults/vaccination-records.html#record-vacc).



## II. SETTING YOUR EDUCATIONAL GOALS

### WHAT WILL I LEARN?

- How to think about and decide what you want from your education
- How to research jobs and careers to help you choose your educational path
- What resources will help you make important decisions about your education

Setting your educational goals involves asking yourself some important questions about your future. What purpose do you want your education to serve? Is it a way to achieve a specific goal - for example, a way to get a better job? Is it an opportunity for personal growth? Or both?

Going through some of the questions below may make it easier to decide and help you get a clear idea of the goals you want to reach. Often there are several answers to a question, so making lists can help you organize your thoughts and priorities.

### CREATING A STRONG PLAN FOR YOUR PERSONAL EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY

A strong plan for going back to school will help you develop and stick to your goals, maintain focus, and spend your time and money wisely. Here are seven steps you can take towards setting your educational goals:

#### STEP 1: ASSESS YOUR BACKGROUND, SKILLS, AND TALENTS.

Start by taking some time for some big picture goal planning. Ask yourself key questions like:

- *Why do you want to go back to school? What motivates you?*
- *How does school fit into your vision for the future?*
- *What kind of career do you want?*
- *What barriers might you encounter in getting the career you want?*

#### STEP 2: DETERMINE WHICH CAREERS MATCH YOUR STRENGTHS AND GOALS.

Come up with a list of jobs you may want. Think critically about your strengths and goals for the future. Key questions include:

- *Do you have experience from a previous job?*
- *Do you have a favorite hobby or pastime? For example, do you like connecting with others or do you prefer to be alone?*
- *Do you find yourself negotiating or debating issues with others?*
- *Do you prefer to be a team leader?*
- *Are you particularly neat or organized?*

#### STEP 3: RESEARCH THE QUALIFICATIONS, EDUCATION, LICENSES, AND/OR CERTIFICATES YOUR DESIRED FIELD REQUIRES.

Before you jump into a career path, it is important to know the educational and training requirements, including any licenses or certificates you may need.

Here are some online and in-person resources that can help you:

- **My Next Move** is a national website (not specific to South Carolina) that can help you research the educational requirements and skills needed for almost any job or career. Visit: [www.mynextmove.org/](http://www.mynextmove.org/).
- **SC Works** is a resource that offers career planning and guidance in addition to some free educational assessments, adult basic education (ABE), and high school diploma equivalency/GED testing located throughout South Carolina. Visit: [scworks.org/](http://scworks.org/).  
The Federal Bureau of Labor has some helpful information about the types of jobs that require licenses and certificates here: [www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2016/article/will-i-need-a-license-or-certification.htm](http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2016/article/will-i-need-a-license-or-certification.htm).
- The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR) lists the boards and agencies it governs, with links describing the license and certifications each one requires. You can learn more here: [llr.sc.gov](http://llr.sc.gov). If you are seeking a licensed profession that is not governed by LLR, please contact Root & Rebound for more information.
- **CareerOneStop** ([www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)) is a website with many tools to help you research the jobs you're interested in, such as:



- “Explore Careers”<sup>15</sup> – will let you compare different occupations, has descriptions of different careers, including what skills and training you need, what level of education most workers typically have, and the types of tasks performed for each job.
- “License Finder”<sup>16</sup>—allows you to look up state licensing requirements for any specific job, as well as the name and contact information of any state licensing board for that job.
- “Certification Finder”<sup>17</sup>—tells you if a job requires certification, as well as the steps to get certified and the names and websites of certifying organizations.
- “Job Search Help for Ex-Offenders”<sup>18</sup>—is a special section of the CareerOneStop website with information, advice, and tools tailored for people in reentry.
- **America’s Service Locator** (in the process of transitioning to CareerOneStop—[www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/service-locator.aspx](http://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/service-locator.aspx)) helps you find employment and training centers near you, where you can get free and low-cost employment services. Phone: 1-877-US2-JOBS.
- **South Carolina Works** ([scworks.org](http://scworks.org)) South Carolina’s one-stop access point to employment-related services, including skills assessment. The website offers a finder to locate the SC Works office nearest you and also has links to most of the websites and services listed above.
- **National College Transition Network** ([www.collegeforadults.org](http://www.collegeforadults.org)) has tips for people in reentry and an “Occupational Exploration” page with resources for adults pursuing new career paths.
- **Local job postings** can help you see exactly what qualifications employers look for when hiring. Try checking the job board at your local public library or employment center. You can also search online job postings on websites such as Craigslist ([www.craigslist.org/about/sites](http://www.craigslist.org/about/sites)), Monster ([www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com)), and Indeed ([www.indeed.com](http://www.indeed.com)).
- **Industry magazines** can be a good source of information on current events, trends, and new developments in your field of interest.
- **People who have the job you want**, as well as employers in the field, can answer questions about what training or credentials are required to be successful in the field.
- **State licensing boards and professional associations** can give you a list of requirements for the particular job or career that they oversee. Their contact information is on the CareerOneStop website ([www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)) as well as the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation website ([llr.sc.gov](http://llr.sc.gov)).<sup>19</sup> You can reach South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation by phone at (803) 896-4300.
- Finally, you can contact **Root & Rebound’s email hotline** at [southcarolina@rootandrebound.org](mailto:southcarolina@rootandrebound.org) to get *legal information and guidance* about how your criminal record impacts your ability to get a specific license or certificate in South Carolina.

#### STEP 4: RESEARCH ANY JOB BARRIERS YOU MAY FACE BECAUSE OF YOUR ARREST OR CONVICTION HISTORY

Some jobs are harder, or maybe even impossible, to get for individuals with certain arrests or convictions on their record. It is important to be hopeful, but also realistic, as you plan for your education and future career. Knowing potential barriers and how to overcome those barriers (if possible) is critical to achieving your goals.

Jobs that give employees access to private or sensitive information (like financial records), vulnerable people (like children, the elderly, patients, or incarcerated people), or high-security locations (like airports or federal buildings) tend to have more barriers for people with conviction histories. Jobs that require a state license or certification also tend to have more barriers for people with criminal records.

**Jobs with Legal Restrictions for People with Criminal Records.** Although this list is incomplete, below are some *examples* of jobs that have legal restrictions for people with certain criminal convictions. In general, these are jobs where employees have access to private or sensitive information (like financial records), vulnerable people (like children or the elderly), or high-security places (such as airports) where there is a greater risk of harm to the public.

- Airport security screeners (or anyone with unsupervised access to secure airport areas);<sup>20</sup>
- Federal law enforcement officers;<sup>21</sup>
- Defense contractors;<sup>22</sup>
- Prisoner transportation workers;<sup>23</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Explore Careers: Career Profiles, U.S. DEP’T OF LABOR CAREERONESTOP, [www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/explore-careers.aspx](http://www.careeronestop.org/ExploreCareers/explore-careers.aspx).

<sup>16</sup> Explore Careers: License Finder, U.S. DEP’T OF LABOR CAREERONESTOP, [www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Training/find-licenses.aspx?keyword=Taxi%20Drivers&direct=0&persist=true&location=SC&ajax=0](http://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Training/find-licenses.aspx?keyword=Taxi%20Drivers&direct=0&persist=true&location=SC&ajax=0).

<sup>17</sup> Explore Careers: Certification Finder, U.S. DEP’T OF LABOR CAREERONESTOP, [www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Training/find-certifications.aspx?keyword=Teacher&location=&direct=0&persist=true&ajax=0](http://www.careeronestop.org/Toolkit/Training/find-certifications.aspx?keyword=Teacher&location=&direct=0&persist=true&ajax=0).

<sup>18</sup> Job Search Help for Ex-Offenders, U.S. DEP’T OF LABOR CAREERONESTOP, [www.careeronestop.org/ExOffender/index.aspx](http://www.careeronestop.org/ExOffender/index.aspx).

<sup>19</sup> SOUTH CAROLINA DEP’T OF LABOR, LICENSING, AND REGULATION: [LLR.SC.GOV](http://LLR.SC.GOV).

<sup>20</sup> 49 U.S.C. § 44935(e)(2)(B).

<sup>21</sup> 5 U.S.C. § 7371(b).

<sup>22</sup> 10 U.S.C. § 2408(a).

<sup>23</sup> 34 U.S.C. § 60103(b)(1).



- Port workers;<sup>24</sup>
- Bank employees;<sup>25</sup>
- Insurance employees;<sup>26</sup>
- Jobs that manage employee benefits plan;<sup>27</sup>
- Childcare workers in federal facilities or agencies;<sup>28</sup>
- Working for a school district in a position that requires certification or in a supervisory capacity (if you have been convicted of a felony defined as serious or violent);<sup>29</sup>

**Occupational Licenses.** In South Carolina, roughly 200 careers require a state license or certificate. There are 50+ licensing boards, agencies, and bureaus that oversee the license application process, and many licensing boards have restrictions about issuing licenses to people with certain convictions. So even though this information can be difficult and frustrating to learn, it will help you to design the best path for yourself—one that you are passionate about but that is also realistic. Given the laws and barriers in place regarding certain professions and licenses, this information may be useful to consider when making decisions regarding your educational path. For more information about legal and professional/occupational licensing restrictions, see the EMPLOYMENT CHAPTER.

Applying for a professional/occupational license generally requires submitting your fingerprints, paying various application fees, and proving that you meet certain educational and/or work experience requirements, which are set by the particular licensing board that you're applying to.<sup>30</sup>

There are over 200 jobs in South Carolina that require a professional/occupational license. Here is a list of a few of the most common jobs that require a license:

- Barber (Board of Barber Examiners)
- Cosmetologist (Board of Cosmetology)
- Security Guard (South Carolina Law Enforcement Division)
- Child Care Worker or Family Child Care Provider (Department of Social Services)
- Teacher (State Board of Education)
- Contractor (Contractor's Licensing Board)
- Real Estate Agent (Real Estate Appraiser's Board)
- Pharmacist or Pharmacy technician (Board of Pharmacy)
- Vehicle Salesperson (Department of Motor Vehicles)
- Lawyer (The State Bar of South Carolina)
- Social Worker (Board of Social Worker Examiners) or Marriage and Family Therapist (Board of Counselors, Therapists, and Specialists)
- Registered Nurse (RN) (Board of Registered Nursing)
- Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) (Board of Nursing)
- Home Health Aid (HHA) or Personal Care Aid (PCA) (Department of Public Health and the National Association for Home Care & Hospice)
- Dentist and Dental Assistant (Dental Board of South Carolina)
- Registered Dental Hygienist (Dental Board of South Carolina)
- Physical Therapist or Physical Therapist Assistant (Board of Physical Therapy Examiners)
- Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) or Paramedic (Department of Health and Environmental Control - EMT division)

To find out whether the specific job you want requires a professional/occupational license, contact the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation (LLR) at 1(803) 896-4300. You can also ask LLR for information to contact the specific licensing board that oversees that type of work. To learn more about specific licensing requirements for the job you want, you will need to contact the specific licensing board that oversees that type of work. For a list of licensing boards and their contact information, go to:

[llr.sc.gov/aboutus/contact.aspx](http://llr.sc.gov/aboutus/contact.aspx).

- For links to each of the licensing boards, also go to: [llr.sc.gov/aboutus/contact.aspx](http://llr.sc.gov/aboutus/contact.aspx).

To learn more about legal restrictions and professional/occupational licensing restrictions for people with criminal records, and ways you may be able to get a license, see the EMPLOYMENT CHAPTER.

## STEP 5: SET YOURSELF UP FOR STABILITY AND SUCCESS BY PLANNING FOR PRACTICAL NEEDS

Outside factors and life circumstances can have a huge impact on your educational goals. As an adult student, you may have work and family obligations to juggle. If you're incarcerated or on parole/probation, you may have to work around special restrictions in order to pursue your education.

<sup>24</sup> 46 U.S.C. § 70105(c).

<sup>25</sup> 12 U.S.C. § 1829.

<sup>26</sup> 18 U.S.C. § 1033(e).

<sup>27</sup> 29 U.S.C. § 1111(a).

<sup>28</sup> 34 U.S.C. § 20351.

<sup>29</sup> S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-115.

<sup>30</sup> See, e.g. SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, LICENSING, AND REGULATION, [llr.sc.gov](http://llr.sc.gov).



In light of all this, you'll want to pick an education program that you can balance with your other responsibilities, and that fits your current situation and future goals. For example, you may ask yourself:

- *How much time do you have to devote to your education?*
- *Do you have a family to support and take care of?*
- *Will you need to work to support yourself while in school?*
- *Are your options limited because you are still incarcerated or on parole or probation?*

## STEP 6: GET ASSESSED TO DETERMINE YOUR EDUCATIONAL AND LEARNING NEEDS

If you are not sure where to start in school, an “educational assessment” or “placement test” will help you figure this out. Also, if you have any special learning needs, differences, or disabilities, there are qualified professionals who can assess you and help you make an educational plan. See below for more information on how to get an educational assessment.

## STEP 7: COLLECT IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS AND OTHER RECORDS REQUIRED FOR ATTENDING SCHOOL

Getting identification documents (ID), transcripts, and other important records allows you to enroll in school and apply for jobs. Here are some key items to assemble as you start to plan to go back to school:

- **Birth Certificate (must be a certified, authorized copy).** A birth certificate is often the first step to obtaining a number of important forms of ID. The fees for birth certificates are different in every state.
- **Social Security Number/Card.** Your Social Security Number is the second critical form of ID to obtain, as it is required for many elements of schooling, financial aid, employment, and other social services.
- **South Carolina State ID or Driver's License.** Your state ID card or driver's license is an important document because it is an official government-issued photo ID that proves your age and identity, and may prove your legal presence in the U.S. You usually need one of these to apply for jobs (and also to open a bank account and vote).
- **Transcripts.** If you completed any college courses inside prison or jail, submit a request for that college to send your transcript to the school you would like to attend. Providing transcripts can help to ensure that you don't lose any college credits you already earned! Keep in mind, different schools have different rules about the schools and programs from which they accept transfer credits. If you have not taken college-level courses yet, you will still need transcripts from high school (if you completed your high school diploma) or your high school equivalency certificate (like the GED) to apply to and enter a college in South Carolina.
- **Immunization/Vaccination Records.** You will need your immunization/ vaccination records to register for school (and some jobs). These records prove that you received certain vaccines and medicines as a child for diseases like polio, chicken pox, tuberculosis, and MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella).
- **References and Letters of Recommendation.** Many school programs, colleges, and employers request *references* with an application. References should be from employers, supervisors, teachers, or mentors who can describe your relevant attributes for the job you are seeking and particular characteristics in a positive manner. References should be people you know well, but should NOT be family members.
- **Selective Service Registration (MALES ONLY).** If you are a male between the ages of 18 and 25 and live in the U.S., you are required to register for the Selective Service before your 26th birthday. This program provides the Federal Government with a list of men to enlist for military service in the case of a national emergency.

**Criminal Record Information.** This is one final suggestion for preparing to go back to school... getting a copy of your criminal record and cleaning it up where possible. This can be an important first step to reduce the effect of your conviction history on your education and career goals. But, you don't have to actually do this before you go back to school— you can do it any time! That said, we recommend looking into record-cleaning while you are in school and well before you apply for jobs, if possible! See the UNDERSTANDING AND CLEANING UP YOUR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHAPTER for more information.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

*When you are exploring your job or career options, consider these resources.*

- **Your correctional facility's library or your local public library**—Look for career planning guides and vocational handbooks.
- **South Carolina Career Guidance Resources**—A career guide, specifically *Pathways to Success*, published by the South Carolina Department of Education. You can request the guide in written form: Kama Statoni, 1429 Senate Street, Columbia, SC, 29201, or by calling (803) 734-8415. If you have Internet access, the guide is available to read or download for free online at: [ed.sc.gov/instruction/career-and-technical-education/career-guidance/career-cluster-guides/](http://ed.sc.gov/instruction/career-and-technical-education/career-guidance/career-cluster-guides/).
- **South Carolina Works ([scworks.org](http://scworks.org))**—offers “interest inventory” tools that can help you explore what kinds of jobs might be right for you. You can also take a self-assessment to learn more about your interests and jobs that might be a good fit. You also can browse jobs in different fields and find out what jobs are more available right now.
- **South Carolina Department of Education ([www.ed.sc.gov](http://www.ed.sc.gov))**—provides links to several South Carolina-focused career-planning resources.



## HELPFUL HINTS

### *Narrow your Career Interests*

Once you have a list of potential jobs and careers that you are interested in, you will need to start narrowing it down. You should start by considering your lifestyle and identifying any factors or circumstances that might conflict with a job you are interested in. For example, criminal convictions, family responsibilities, and travel or mobility restrictions can affect whether a particular job or career is a good fit for you.

### *Research the Job Market*

Know what the job market is like in your desired field, in the region where you live, and for workers with different skill levels and education levels.

#### *Questions to ask:*

- How hard is it to get a job in the field with or without an educational degree?
- What do employers look for when hiring?
- Are there many job openings in the field, or is it very difficult to get hired?<sup>31</sup> Is the field growing and expanding?

#### *Resources to use:*

- Talk to people in your field of interest, and browse job-search and career guides such as the Occupational Outlook Handbook.<sup>32</sup>
- Look online: The South Carolina Career Development Association offers an interactive online job guide, which provides information on hundreds of jobs, available at [sccda.wildapricot.org](http://sccda.wildapricot.org)
- You can also use the tools on the SC Works ([scworks.org](http://scworks.org)) website and contact professional associations in your fields of interest.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATS. *Charting the projections: 2012-22 A special issue*, Occupational Outlook Quarterly (Winter 2013-14), [www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2013/winter/winter2013ooq.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2013/winter/winter2013ooq.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics releases the Occupational Outlook Handbook and the Career Guide to Industries every two years. These resources offer information about the nature of work, working conditions, training and education, earnings, and job outlook for hundreds of different occupations.



## **HOW YOUR CRIMINAL RECORD AND INCARCERATION MAY AFFECT YOUR EDUCATIONAL GOALS**

### **IF I AM STILL INCARCERATED, WHAT BARRIERS MIGHT I FACE IN PURSUING MY EDUCATION?**

Thankfully, the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP), the South Carolina Department of Corrections, Division of Programs, Reentry, and Rehabilitation (SCDC), and the South Carolina Department of Education (South Carolina DOE) have all recognized that providing educational opportunities to people who are incarcerated is critical to rehabilitation and reducing recidivism.<sup>33</sup> However, the systems are far from perfect, and it is important for you to be aware of the obstacles you may face when you are pursuing an education while incarcerated. Be patient! There is almost always a way to make it work if you are dedicated to reaching your educational goals.

Next, we go through common issues you may face when pursuing your education while incarcerated, followed by suggestions to help you achieve your goals in spite of these challenges.

#### **The programs I need are just not available.**

The quality and availability of programs for different educational needs varies greatly from facility to facility. Additionally, even if your facility offers the program you want, there are often long waiting lists to get enrolled.

**Suggestion:** Try supplementing your coursework with a correspondence course or related self-study. If you are waiting to get into a class, find out what the students are learning about—maybe you can get a head start!

#### **The prison mail system is getting in the way.**

If you decide to take a correspondence course, or if you want to create your own self-study program, you may find that the prison mail system is frustrating your efforts. Materials and assignments may be slow in getting to you, and some items may not get to you at all because they are not allowed by your facility. All of this could mean significant delays in your studies or prevent you from completing them at all.

**Suggestion:** Be patient. There is no time limit on most correspondence courses—you can take as long as you need to complete the coursework. The goal is to learn the materials and pass the class, no matter how long it takes. Slow progress is still progress! If you find that your facility is overly restrictive in what materials it will allow in, try writing to the correspondence course administrator to explain your situation. See if they can put the materials into a format that your facility will be less likely to object to.

#### **I can't afford the cost of programs and/or materials.**

For any program or course that is not offered by the facility directly, you will be responsible for the cost of any necessary books, materials, or course fees. If you cannot afford these expenses, you may be prevented from participating in the program or taking the course.

**Suggestion:** Try to find someone else at your facility who is taking or has taken the course. See if that person is willing to share materials with you or donate them to you when he or she is done. Look into financial aid options to help with your costs. Some forms of financial aid are available while you are incarcerated, and there are even special scholarships to help incarcerated people afford textbooks and materials. (See the section *Paying for Your Education* for more information about these programs.)

#### **I have limited access to technologies.**

Distance Education courses commonly require that you have access to certain technologies (audio/video equipment, computers, the internet) in order to participate in the program (except for traditional mail-only correspondence courses). If you don't have a way to use the media that contains the course content, you won't be able to take the course.

**Suggestion:** Shop around for a course that doesn't require the use of equipment that you don't have. Try signing up for a program or activity in your facility that will give you access to the technology you need and will allow you to use it in your spare time. (Make sure you are authorized to do so!)

#### **I am not eligible for financial aid.**

Certain types of financial aid are not available to you while you are incarcerated, and other types are not available if you have certain types of convictions.

**Suggestion:** Apply for the types of financial aid that are available to you while you are incarcerated. Plus, while you are incarcerated, you can apply for financial aid that you will become eligible for once you are released, so the money will be ready for you when you get out. (For more information about financial aid, see *Paying for your Education*.)

<sup>33</sup> S.C. DEP'T OF CORR. DIVISION OF PROGRAMS, REENTRY, AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES, [www.doc.sc.gov/programs/programs.html](http://www.doc.sc.gov/programs/programs.html).



## IF I AM UNDER FEDERAL, STATE, OR COUNTY SUPERVISION, WHAT BARRIERS MIGHT I FACE?

While you are under supervision, your parole or probation officer should fully support your efforts to pursue your education.<sup>34</sup> However, sometimes even the normal conditions of supervision can get in the way, and make it difficult for you to reach your educational goals. Fortunately, there are ways to work around your restrictions and steps you can take to stay on track even while they are in place.



**IMPORTANT:** If you find that your parole or probation officer is not supportive of your efforts to get an education, or that the conditions of your supervision are so restrictive that they make it impossible for you to pursue your education, this might be a violation of your rights. You should contact an attorney who can advise you and look into getting your restrictive conditions lifted.

Here are some of the common barriers that you might face when trying to pursue your education while you are under supervision, followed by suggestions that can help you achieve your goals in spite of the challenges.

### I can't get to school because I have travel limitations.

While you are on supervision you may have restrictions on how far you can travel, or you may not have reliable transportation, or you may have to rely on public transportation. All of these factors may limit where you can go to school.

**Suggestion:** Look into local schools and programs that are easily accessible for you and do not involve a long commute. You can also explore Distance Education and correspondence course options. You may even be able to use the computers at your local public library to take these courses.

### I can't go to the school I want because I can't move out of the area.

Similar to travel restrictions, while you are under supervision, you probably will not be allowed to move outside of the county or the state. If the school you want to go to is in another county or state, you may not be able to attend it.

**Suggestion:** Again, local schools and programs are your best bet. If you are located in a rural area where your options are severely limited, get started earning credits through Distance Education and correspondence courses. Once you've completed your term of supervision, you can transfer to the school you want to attend and bring your earned credits with you. Speak with your probation or parole officer. It may be possible for you to transfer your probation/parole to the city where the school is located.

### I can't fit school into my schedule because of restrictions on my time ("passes", curfews, work requirements).

While you are under supervision, you may be restricted in the amount of time you can spend attending classes, or by the hours of the day that you are allowed to be away from home to attend. You may have a curfew imposed on you or you may be required to get a "pass" that is only good for a short period of time in order to leave your residence. You may also be required to work a certain number of hours a day, which leaves little time for school.

**Suggestion:** If you only have a limited amount of time to attend school each day, consider starting part time instead of full time. Take a class or two, and then build your schedule up when you are able. Also, Distance Education programs and correspondence courses are more flexible and can generally be worked around any schedule.

## I AM REQUIRED TO REGISTER AS A SEX OFFENDER. HOW WILL THIS AFFECT GOING BACK TO SCHOOL?

If you are required to register as a sex offender, you should still be able to attend the school or program of your choice, but will face some extra requirements. In addition to fulfilling your South Carolina Sex Offender Registry registration requirements, within three days of attending school, you must also register at the sheriff's department in the county where the school is located.<sup>35</sup> Depending on your underlying conviction, you may need to comply with sex-offender residency restrictions, which could prevent you from living on or near campus. Similarly, your conditions of parole, probation or supervision may affect your ability to attend classes. If this is the case, ask your attorney or parole or probation officer for help adding an exception for attending classes. Until an exception is made, you should comply with your conditions first.

## IF I HAVE COMPLETED MY SENTENCE, AND I'M OFF SUPERVISION, WHAT BARRIERS MIGHT I STILL FACE?

Once you have completed your sentence, including any term of supervision, most of the barriers that we have discussed so far will no longer exist for you. Unfortunately, your criminal record may still inhibit or interfere

<sup>34</sup> S.C. DEP'T OF PROBATION, PAROLE, AND PARDON, [www.dppps.sc.gov](http://www.dppps.sc.gov).

<sup>35</sup> S.C. Code Ann. § 23-3-460 (A); § 23-3-460 (C).



with your educational plans. See below for more information in the section called, *Can I be denied acceptance to an educational program or institution because of my criminal history?*

## **HOW TO CHOOSE THE EDUCATIONAL PATH THAT MEETS YOUR SPECIFIC EDUCATIONAL GOALS**

### **ONCE EVERYTHING IS CONSIDERED, HOW DO I START FINDING THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM THAT IS RIGHT FOR ME?**

Whatever educational level you are currently and whatever your future education plans are, the general steps you should follow when deciding on a program are the same. Use these steps to help guide you through your decision-making process. Along the way, you can talk to people around you who can help. Your Correctional Counselor, the staff in the Education Department, a school or career center counselor, and family and friends can provide advice and support throughout this process.

#### **STEP 1: FIND PROGRAMS THAT FIT YOUR NEEDS**

Obviously, you want to find a program that meets the interests that you identified in the very beginning of this chapter see *Setting Your Educational Goals*, PG. 10, but in order to find a program that truly fits your needs, you must consider the practical factors that will impact your educational experience. You should think through the following questions to help you guide your decision:

- Do you want to study full or part-time?
- Is it more important for you to finish the program quickly or do you need to split your class time with other responsibilities?
- Would you prefer to go to a large school or a smaller school?
- Do you need to be in a classroom at all, or is distance learning a better option for you?
- Do you want to go to a public (state-funded) or private (privately owned) school?

#### **STEP 2: RESEARCH SCHOOL/PROGRAM QUALITY**

Evaluate the quality of each school or program by following these steps:

- **Check for “accreditation” and other approval.**
  - Find out if the school or program is accredited. Accredited schools have been reviewed by an accredited organization recognized by the U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC. (USDE) and meets established USDE requirements.<sup>36</sup>
  - If working in a field that requires a license and certification, find out if the school or program is approved by the proper state licensing agency and the professional organization that grants certifications.
  - Search for a school in the Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions & Programs ([ope.ed.gov/dapip/#/home](http://ope.ed.gov/dapip/#/home)). If a school is accredited, it will show up in the database.
- **Find data on how well the school’s graduates are doing.** Find out if the school has a Gainful Employment Disclosure, which should provide information about overall costs for students, average debt, graduation and job placement rates, and which occupations students are prepared to pursue in the job market.<sup>37</sup>
- **Talk to people in the school or program.** Ask current students, alumni (former students), and teachers how well the school or program prepares students for their field, and whether it helps students find jobs.
- **Ask employers what they think of the program.** Find employers in the field that you would want to work for and ask them to rate the program.

#### **LARGER SCHOOLS V. SMALLER SCHOOLS**

Larger schools tend to have a more diverse student population and a greater variety of extra-curricular activities and clubs. However, you may feel distracted and overwhelmed in this environment, and class size is larger, which means less individual attention from the teacher.

<sup>36</sup> 34 C.F.R. § 600, [www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-600](http://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-600); U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC. OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUC. *Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training You Need* (2012), [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/take-charge-your-future.pdf](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/take-charge-your-future.pdf); see also Anna Crayton & Nicole Lindahl, *Back to School: A Guide to Continuing Your Education after Prison*, Prisoner Reentry Institute, John Jay College of Criminal Justice (2010), [www.fullerton.edu/rebound/resources/Crayton%20and%20Lindahl\\_Back%20to%20School%20-%20A%20Guide%20to%20Continuing%20Your%20Education%20after%20Prison.pdf](http://www.fullerton.edu/rebound/resources/Crayton%20and%20Lindahl_Back%20to%20School%20-%20A%20Guide%20to%20Continuing%20Your%20Education%20after%20Prison.pdf). There are many accrediting agencies out there, but only some are nationally recognized as legitimate. Current lists of nationally and regionally recognized accrediting agencies can be found on the U.S. Dep’t of Educ. and Council for Higher Education Accreditation website, [www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation\\_PG6.html](http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_PG6.html). See also, Recognized Accrediting Organizations, Council for Higher Educ. Accreditation, [www.chea.org/directories](http://www.chea.org/directories). For more details on accreditation, see Diploma Mills & Accreditation—Accreditation, U.S. Dep’t of Educ., [www2.ed.gov/students/prep/college/diplomamills/accreditation.html](http://www2.ed.gov/students/prep/college/diplomamills/accreditation.html).

<sup>37</sup> Schools are legally required to provide this document if they receive federal funding. *Gainful Employment Information*, [STUDENTAID.GOV/DATA-CENTER/SCHOOL/GE](http://STUDENTAID.GOV/DATA-CENTER/SCHOOL/GE).



### WARNING: BE CAREFUL OF SCHOOLS OR PROGRAMS THAT ARE SCAMS:

- Beware of for-profit schools that are out to take your money—not to give you a quality education. These schools spend lots of money on recruiting, and little on teaching or career services for students. They also tend to charge higher tuition than public community colleges and are likely to leave you with high debt, poor training, and slim chances of finding a job. Following the research steps above will help you avoid these schools.
- Similarly, beware of “schools” or “programs” that are fake or out to scam you! There are “diploma mills” — companies selling diplomas. These companies promise to give you a certificate, diploma, or degree for very little work in a very short time. The credentials they offer have little or no value in the job market.<sup>38</sup>

Here are some warning signs that a “school” or “program” may be a scam or a diploma mill:

- It is not accredited, or it is accredited by an agency that is not nationally recognized;
- It requires little or no academic work, and involves minimal interaction with teachers;
- It allows you to earn a certificate in an unusually short period of time;
- It requires that you pay a flat fee for the credential;
- Its mailing address is a post office box or suite number;
- Its website ends in “.com” instead of “.edu”.

### *Why accreditation is important:*

- Employers generally respect credentials from an accredited institution with a good reputation, and view job-seekers with such credentials more favorably.
- Credits from a non-accredited school, generally cannot be transferred to an accredited school.
- You must attend an accredited school to be eligible for government financial aid.

To learn more about accreditation and find out if the school or program you are interested in is accredited, check the following resources:

- U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC., Database of Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs online at: [ope.ed.gov/accreditation/](https://ope.ed.gov/accreditation/) or by phone at: 1-855-831-9922.
- Council on Higher Education Accreditation online at: [www.chea.org](https://www.chea.org).
- Accrediting Commission for Schools, Western Association of Schools and Colleges (K-12 and non-degree granting postsecondary schools and programs) online at: [www.acswasc.org/](https://www.acswasc.org/).
- Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges, online at: [www.accsc.org/directory/](https://www.accsc.org/directory/).
- Distance Education Accrediting Commission (formerly Distance Education Training Council) at: [www.deac.org](https://www.deac.org).

**NOTE:** All adult schools in SCDC facilities are fully accredited by the Palmetto Unified and/or The National Center for Construction Education and Training (NCCET), and many (NCCET) programs offer industry-standard certification.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUC. ACCREDITATION *Degree Mills: An Old Problem and a New Threat*, [www.chea.org/degree-mills-old-problem-new-threat](https://www.chea.org/degree-mills-old-problem-new-threat).

<sup>39</sup> S.C. DEP’T OF CORRECTIONS, Division of Programs, Reentry, and Rehabilitation, [www.doc.sc.gov/programs/programs.html](https://www.doc.sc.gov/programs/programs.html).



## STEP 3: APPLY!

## CAN I BE DENIED ACCEPTANCE TO AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OR INSTITUTION BECAUSE OF MY CRIMINAL HISTORY?

**COMMON APPLICATION DROPPED THE CRIMINAL HISTORY QUESTION**

In 2018, the common application removed the criminal history question from its application. This change was scheduled to start with the 2019-2020 application. Over 800 colleges and universities around the world use the common application.

Not all colleges ask about criminal history, but many do.<sup>40</sup> According to research conducted by the Institute of Higher Education Policy (IHEP), about 72% of higher education institutions require applicants to disclose their criminal history.<sup>41</sup>

Most commonly, institutions ask applicants to self-report their criminal history (for example, answer “yes” and then explain). Schools can use Criminal Justice Information (CJI) to deny admission to people with criminal records. Some schools conduct full criminal background checks on prospective students.<sup>42</sup>

Unfortunately, there is nothing illegal about what they’re doing, and no real legal way to stop them from doing it. The best defense, however, is a good offense—in other words, be proactive! Take steps to clean up your criminal record, participate in rehabilitation programs, and be prepared with answers to questions about your criminal history.

**The Good News...**

Many colleges and universities will let you appeal a denial based on your criminal record, and will sometimes work with you to help you get in. However, not all institutions share appeal-related information with applicants denied based on criminal history.<sup>43</sup> Reach out to the Admissions Office staff and to school advisors to show them that you are serious and dedicated to your future. Take advantage of any opportunity to

show that your criminal history is just that—history. You can use your personal essay (part of your application), in-person interview, letters of recommendation, and any other supporting documents to show the admissions committee that you are more than just your record.

Here are some other facts to keep in mind that work in your favor:

- There are no educational opportunities that you are legally banned from because of your criminal record—no matter what is in it;
- Distance Education programs are not likely to ask about your criminal history because they do not have to worry about campus safety (Although there is no evidence that a student with a criminal history poses an increased safety risk,<sup>44</sup> this is the main reason schools care about your criminal history).
- Many schools will look at your criminal history only to flag you if you are applying to a program in a career field that you’re not allowed to work in anyway because of your criminal history (common in medical schools).<sup>45</sup>
- Some colleges collect criminal history information, but never actually use it.<sup>46</sup>

**DO I NEED TO DISCLOSE MY JUVENILE RECORD WHEN APPLYING TO DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS?**

Maybe. Technically, a juvenile “adjudication” is not a criminal conviction. If your case was heard in a juvenile court, and you received a juvenile adjudication, then you were not “convicted” of a crime. So, if the application asks if you were “convicted of a crime” or if you have any “criminal convictions,” and you only have a juvenile “adjudication,” you can truthfully answer “no.” You do not have to disclose your juvenile adjudication. However, some applications ask if you have ever been “arrested” or “adjudicated guilty,” in which case, your juvenile arrest and adjudication count, and need to be reported. *Remember*, if you were tried as an adult, even if you were under 18, and you pleaded or were found guilty, then you do have a criminal conviction.

<sup>40</sup> INSIDE HIGHER ED. Alexis Gravely. *A Natural Progression* (September 7, 2021), [www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2021/09/07/congress-looks-remove-criminal-history-questions-admissions](http://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2021/09/07/congress-looks-remove-criminal-history-questions-admissions).

<sup>41</sup> INSIDE HIGHER ED. Alexis Gravely. *A Natural Progression* (September 7, 2021), [www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2021/09/07/congress-looks-remove-criminal-history-questions-admissions](http://www.insidehighered.com/admissions/article/2021/09/07/congress-looks-remove-criminal-history-questions-admissions).

<sup>42</sup> IHEP (Institute for Higher Education Policy), Chapter 6, *Eliminating The Use of Criminal Justice Information*, [WWW.IHEP.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2021/06/IHEP\\_JOYCE\\_REPORT\\_CH6\\_CJI.PDF](http://WWW.IHEP.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2021/06/IHEP_JOYCE_REPORT_CH6_CJI.PDF).

<sup>43</sup> IHEP (Institute for Higher Education Policy), Chapter 6, *Eliminating The Use of Criminal Justice Information*, [WWW.IHEP.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2021/06/IHEP\\_JOYCE\\_REPORT\\_CH6\\_CJI.PDF](http://WWW.IHEP.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2021/06/IHEP_JOYCE_REPORT_CH6_CJI.PDF).

<sup>44</sup> IHEP (Institute for Higher Education Policy), Chapter 6, *Eliminating The Use of Criminal Justice Information*, [WWW.IHEP.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2021/06/IHEP\\_JOYCE\\_REPORT\\_CH6\\_CJI.PDF](http://WWW.IHEP.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2021/06/IHEP_JOYCE_REPORT_CH6_CJI.PDF).

<sup>45</sup> IHEP (Institute for Higher Education Policy), Chapter 6, *Eliminating The Use of Criminal Justice Information*, [WWW.IHEP.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2021/06/IHEP\\_JOYCE\\_REPORT\\_CH6\\_CJI.PDF](http://WWW.IHEP.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2021/06/IHEP_JOYCE_REPORT_CH6_CJI.PDF).

<sup>46</sup> IHEP (Institute for Higher Education Policy), Chapter 6, *Eliminating The Use of Criminal Justice Information*, [WWW.IHEP.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2021/06/IHEP\\_JOYCE\\_REPORT\\_CH6\\_CJI.PDF](http://WWW.IHEP.ORG/WP-CONTENT/UPLOADS/2021/06/IHEP_JOYCE_REPORT_CH6_CJI.PDF).



**IMPORTANT:** Even if you are not directly asked to disclose your juvenile record on an application, you may want to anyway. There is always a chance that the admissions committee will find out about a juvenile arrest or adjudication somehow, and think you were being dishonest in not reporting it. **HOWEVER**, when you get your juvenile record expunged in South Carolina, *it's as if it never existed*.<sup>47</sup> So, if you got your juvenile record expunged, you do not need to disclose anything in it.

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<sup>47</sup> S.C. Code Ann. § 63-19-2050 (E).



### III. FIGURING OUT YOUR CURRENT EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

#### WHAT WILL I LEARN?

- What an educational assessment is and how to get one
- What learning challenges are and how to get tested for them

#### WHAT IS AN “EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT”? WHY DO I NEED ONE?

If you're not sure how far you got in school, or it's been so long that you're not sure what your current educational level is, your first step is to get an “educational assessment.” An educational assessment is simply a way to find out what your current ability level is in English, reading, writing, and math.

It is important to get an educational assessment before you start any educational program so that you don't waste time re-learning things you already know or taking classes for which, you are not prepared.

#### HOW DO I GET AN EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT?

The easiest way to assess your education level is to take an assessment test (also called a placement test). There are two assessment tests that are often used for adults who wish to continue their education: the TABE and the CASAS.<sup>48</sup>

Don't worry, these are not the kind of tests you need to study for! These tests measure what academic skills you're already good at and which ones you need to work on. They help you determine what classes will be the right fit for your current education level.

#### WHAT DO TABE AND CASAS STAND FOR?

**TABE:**  
Test of Adult Basic Education

**CASAS:** Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems

#### WHERE DO I GO FOR A PLACEMENT TEST?

##### *If you're currently incarcerated:*

- **In a federal prison:** When you get to the federal facility, the staff will review the information from your county jail assessment to determine your needs. If you do not have an educational assessment on file and you have not earned a high school diploma or GED, the facility's education department should give you an assessment test.<sup>49</sup> If you did not receive an educational assessment and you think you need one, or if you have any questions about the process, talk to your case manager or your facility's education department staff.
- **In a South Carolina state prison:** When you get to the state facility, SCDC staff will review your file from the county jail to determine if you need an educational assessment. SCDC requires that you have a TABE score on file. If the county jail that did your assessment did not give you a TABE assessment, you will be required to do one when you get to a state facility (even if the jail gave you an assessment using a different test). If this doesn't happen, ask your correctional counselor to arrange for you to take the TABE, or submit a request to the Testing Coordinator in your facility's education department. Based on your TABE results, staff will recommend classes that are appropriate for you. If you already have a high school diploma or GED, SCDC will NOT do a TABE assessment for you.
- **In a South Carolina county jail**—Any county jail that offers educational programs will also offer educational assessments. If you feel that you need an educational assessment, or have questions about your education level, contact the facility's education staff.

**NOTE:** When you first got to county jail while your case was pending, you likely were given a comprehensive evaluation, which included an assessment of your physical and mental health, your drug history, and your education history. Based on your answers to questions about your educational history, facility staff decided whether or not to do a full educational assessment on you. If you reported that you already have a high school diploma or GED, the staff may have decided not to give you a full educational assessment because you already meet the minimum education-level requirement. Information from your county jail assessment will be sent to any facility that you are transferred to in the future.

<sup>48</sup> TABE stands for Tests of Adult Basic Education; CASAS stands for Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems. See U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL & ADULT EDUC., TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR FUTURE: GET THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING YOU NEED (2012), [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/take-charge-your-future.pdf](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/take-charge-your-future.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> 18 U.S.C. § 3624(f)(4); 28 C.F.R. pt. 544 subpt. H; U.S. Dep't Justice Fed. Bureau of Prisons, Program Statement 5300.21, Education, Training, and Leisure Time Program Standards (Feb. 18, 2002); U.S. Dep't Justice Fed. Bureau of Prisons, Program Statement 5350.24 English-as-a-Second-Language Program (July 24, 1997); U.S. Dep't Justice, Legal Resource Guide to the Federal Bureau of Prisons (2014) at 19-20; see also Christopher Zoukis, Education in the Federal Bureau of Prisons (2013), [prisonerresource.com/education-federal-bureau-prisons/](http://prisonerresource.com/education-federal-bureau-prisons/).



**IMPORTANT: If you are about to be released, talk to your counselor to make sure that you get all of your educational assessment information and any other paperwork relating to any educational courses you completed while you were incarcerated.**

**If you're formerly incarcerated:**

- If you have returned to the community after a period of incarceration, it's likely that you had an educational assessment done while you were inside (see above). If you CAN get this information from your facility, you will NOT need to get another assessment once you are out. Contact the last facility that you were in and ask to have all of your assessment and placement information sent to you.
- If you cannot get your assessment information from your facility, or if it has been a very long time since your last assessment or since you last attended school, you may want to get reassessed.
- Visit or contact your local public library or an adult education program or community college near you to get information about placement testing. Note: You may have to pay a fee for placement testing, although most schools and programs offer free assessments for students who enroll with them.
- If you have Internet access, check these websites for adult education programs near you that may offer testing:
  - National Literacy Directory: [www.nld.org](http://www.nld.org)
  - South Carolina State Library Continuing Education: [guides.statelibrary.sc.gov/continuing-education/learning-opportunities](http://guides.statelibrary.sc.gov/continuing-education/learning-opportunities)
  - South Carolina Adult Education: [ed.sc.gov/instruction/adult-education/](http://ed.sc.gov/instruction/adult-education/)
  - South Carolina Educational Television Adult Education and GED Resources: [www.sctv.org/education/services-school-districts/adult-education](http://www.sctv.org/education/services-school-districts/adult-education)
  - Community Colleges in South Carolina: [www.collegesimply.com/colleges/south-carolina/community-colleges/](http://www.collegesimply.com/colleges/south-carolina/community-colleges/)

## **LEARNING CHALLENGES AND SPECIAL NEEDS**

### **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO HAVE A LEARNING CHALLENGE OR SPECIAL NEED?**

Each of us learns in our own way and at our own speed. However, for many people, their brains have particular trouble receiving, storing, processing, retrieving, or communicating information.<sup>50</sup> The brain's trouble with these things is called a learning challenge (often called a "learning disability"). Unfortunately, many people have struggled in school their whole lives, but do not realize that their difficulties stem from learning challenges that can be overcome. Many people with learning challenges are able to prosper in school if they get the proper guidance, support, and instruction. The most common learning challenges are:

- **Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**—inability to control behavior or pay attention, often accompanied by hyperactivity.
- **Dyslexia**—difficulty reading, understanding, and processing written words.
- **Dyscalculia**—difficulty with number values, calculations, and math concepts.

There are many other types of learning challenges, including those related to writing, processing visual or sound information, memory, organization, and attention to detail. If certain subjects—or school in general—always seemed difficult for you, you may suffer from a learning challenge that was not discovered. For more information about learning challenges, visit the Learning Disabilities Association of America at [ldaamerica.org/info/adult-learning-disability-assessment-process/](http://ldaamerica.org/info/adult-learning-disability-assessment-process/), or the National Association for Adults with Learning Disabilities at [naasln.org](http://naasln.org).

### **HOW DO I FIND OUT IF I HAVE A LEARNING CHALLENGE?**

If you think you may have a learning challenge, the first step is to get a professional assessment. A qualified professional can determine the source of your difficulty, and work with you to figure out what special learning tools may help you overcome it. Additionally, if you are diagnosed with a learning disability, schools and programs are required by law to give you special treatment to allow for your special learning needs. This is called giving you an "accommodation."

Accommodations can include:

- Giving you extra time to take tests;
- Letting you use a calculator; OR
- Providing you with reading or writing assistance.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> NAT'L CTR. FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES, *The State of Learning Disabilities* (3d ed. 2014).

<sup>51</sup> U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC. OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL & ADULT EDUC., *Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training You Need* (2012).



**If you are currently incarcerated:**

- **In a federal prison:** Federal law requires that if you do not have a high school diploma or GED, you must try to get one while you are incarcerated. Federal facilities will test you for any learning disabilities that might affect your ability to successfully complete a high school credential program.<sup>52</sup>
- **In a South Carolina state prison:** SCDC may not specifically test for learning disabilities. However, SCDC may assume that you have a learning disability if you get below a certain score on your TABE or if you tell them that you have a learning disability.
- **In a South Carolina county jail:** Generally, if you get an educational assessment, your facility's staff will review your results and should be able to determine if you might need a learning disability assessment also.

**If you are formerly incarcerated:**

To find a qualified professional in your area who can assess you for a learning disability, check the following resources:<sup>53</sup>

- South Carolina's Department of Education Disability Resources: [ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/special-education-services/parent-resources/disability-resources/](http://ed.sc.gov/districts-schools/special-education-services/parent-resources/disability-resources/)
- Learning Disabilities Association of South Carolina: [ldaamerica.org/affiliates/south-carolina/](http://ldaamerica.org/affiliates/south-carolina/)
- Your local community mental health services office: Find an office through the Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator: [findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov)
- Your local community college's Student Services division: A list of community colleges can be found through the American Association of Community Colleges [www.aacc.nche.edu](http://www.aacc.nche.edu)
- Adult literacy and/or education programs at your local public library
- A local private psychologist or psychology clinic
- Your local college or university's psychology department
- University hospitals and clinics
- To learn about additional resources and some scholarships for students with disabilities pursuing college, see: [www.edchoice.org](http://www.edchoice.org) or [www.exceptionalsc.org](http://www.exceptionalsc.org).

<sup>52</sup> Telephone Interview with Roy (last name unknown), FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, INDUSTRIES, EDUC., & VOCATIONAL TRAINING DIV. (Apr. 2, 2015).

<sup>53</sup> LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOC. OF AMERICA, Adult Learning Disability Assessment Process, [ldaamerica.org/info/adult-learning-disability-assessment-process/](http://ldaamerica.org/info/adult-learning-disability-assessment-process/); see also ANNA CRAYTON & NICOLE LINDAHL, BACK TO SCHOOL: A GUIDE TO CONTINUING YOUR EDUCATION AFTER PRISON, PRISONER REENTRY INSTITUTE, JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE (2010).



## IV. LEARNING THE EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The results of your educational assessment will tell you your current educational level. Based on that information, you must choose what the right next step is for you. Depending on what your educational level is, the next step may be clear, or you may have to decide between several different possible paths. Here are the different types of educational programs you may encounter.

### ADULT BASIC EDUCATION (ABE)

If you never went to high school or took any high school-level classes, you will need to start with Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes.

#### WHAT IS ABE? HOW CAN IT HELP ME?

- Adult Basic Education (ABE) is for adults who want to gain the basic skills and knowledge needed for school, work, and everyday life. You can find free or low-cost ABE classes at adult schools (also called “adult education programs”) across the country.<sup>54</sup> ABE programs often offer the following kinds of classes:
  - Basic literacy classes help you learn to read and write for the first time.
  - Reading, writing, and math classes help you improve your English language skills and math skills.
  - Life skills classes build your skills in money management, communication, computer use, etc.
  - Pre-GED classes help you prepare to pass the General Education Development exam.
  - English as a Second Language (ESL) classes improve your fluency in English, if it isn’t your native language.<sup>55</sup>
- Your assessment test will tell you what skills you need to improve, and therefore which ABE classes are right for you.

#### HOW MUCH DO ABE CLASSES COST?

##### *If you’re currently incarcerated:*

In a federal prison,<sup>56</sup> a South Carolina state prison,<sup>57</sup> or a South Carolina county jail,<sup>58</sup> ABE classes (including necessary books and study materials) are offered at no cost to you.

##### *If you’re formerly incarcerated:*

Free or low-cost ABE classes may be available in adult schools or community colleges near you. Many schools provide ABE classes for free, and provide books and materials for free too. Others may charge registration and tuition fees and/or require you to buy your own books and materials. Some schools that charge fees may also offer financial aid to low-income students. You will need to check with the individual school or program about fees and financial aid.<sup>59</sup>

#### HOW DO I GET INTO ABE CLASSES?

##### *If you’re currently incarcerated:*

- **In a federal prison:** Soon after you enter prison, your unit team and education department staff should give you an assessment test and recommend classes for you. You should then have access to ABE classes. (In federal facilities, ABE is part of a broader program called Adult Continuing Education or ACE). If your assessment shows that you’re not fluent in English, you must be enrolled in ESL, and if you don’t have a high school credential, you must be enrolled in classes designed to lead to a GED or high school diploma.<sup>60</sup> If you’re not enrolled in these classes for some reason, but you want to be, ask your educational advisor about getting placed into these classes.
- **In a South Carolina state prison:** To enroll in any education program, you must have a TABE score on file. (To learn how to sign up for TABE, see [PG. 21](#).) Once you’ve done the TABE assessment, you should be

<sup>54</sup> Adult schools are funded by the state and the national government. S.C. Code Ann. Title 59, S.C. Dep’t of Education, [ed.sc.gov](http://ed.sc.gov).

<sup>55</sup> S.C. DEPT. OF EDUCATION, [ed.sc.gov/instruction/adult-education/english-as-a-second-language/](http://ed.sc.gov/instruction/adult-education/english-as-a-second-language/).

<sup>56</sup> U.S. DEP’T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, Program Statement 5300.21, Education, Training, and Leisure Time Program Standards (Feb. 18, 2002); U.S. DEP’T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, A Directory of Bureau of Prisons’ National Programs (May 21, 2014); U.S. DEP’T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, Custody & Care: Education Programs, [www.bop.gov/inmates/custody\\_ft\\_care/education.jsp](http://www.bop.gov/inmates/custody_ft_care/education.jsp); U.S. DEP’T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, Inmate Information Handbook Federal Bureau of Prisons: Programs and Services—Education Programs (Nov. 2012) at 16.

<sup>57</sup> S.C. DEP’T OF CORRECTIONS, S.C. ADULT EDUCATION ASSESSMENT POLICY, [ED.SC.GOV/INSTRUCTION/ADULT-EDUCATION/ADULT-EDUCATION-GUIDELINES1/SOUTH-CAROLINA-ASSESSMENT-POLICY-APPENDIX-B/](http://ED.SC.GOV/INSTRUCTION/ADULT-EDUCATION/ADULT-EDUCATION-GUIDELINES1/SOUTH-CAROLINA-ASSESSMENT-POLICY-APPENDIX-B/).

<sup>58</sup> Id. (See above)

<sup>59</sup> S.C. EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION ADULT EDUCATION AND GED RESOURCES, [www.scetv.org/education/services-school-districts/adult-education](http://www.scetv.org/education/services-school-districts/adult-education)

<sup>60</sup> ESL students must reach an 8<sup>th</sup> grade level in listening and reading comprehension; pre-GED students must log 240 class hours of Adult Literacy or earn a GED, whichever comes first. See U.S. DEP’T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, PROGRAM STATEMENT 5350.24 English-as-a-Second-Language Program (July 24, 1997); U.S. DEP’T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, PROGRAM STATEMENT 5350.28 LITERACY PROGRAM (GED STANDARD) (Dec. 1, 2003); U.S. DEP’T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, PROGRAM STATEMENT 5300.21, EDUCATION TRAINING & LEISURE TIME PROGRAM STANDARDS (Feb. 18, 2002); U.S. DEP’T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, A Directory of Bureau of Prisons’ National Programs (May 21, 2014) at 1-3; see also 18 U.S.C. § 3624.



able to attend ABE classes that are right for your level.<sup>61</sup> For example, if you're not fluent in English, you can enroll in ESL, and if you're reading below a 6<sup>th</sup> grade level, you can enroll in basic literacy classes. If you're not enrolled in these programs, but you want to be, ask your correctional counselor or education department staff.

- **In a South Carolina county jail:** Although educational programs vary by county, if your facility offers educational programming, Adult Basic Education will most likely be part of it.

#### **If you're formerly incarcerated:**

- Visit any public library or community bookstore to find free or low-cost ABE study materials, including books for the classroom and self-study books that you can work through on your own.
- Contact any public library, adult school, or community college to ask about ABE classes near you.
- You can also search the Internet for adult education programs near you:
  - National Literacy Directory: [www.nld.org](http://www.nld.org)
  - South Carolina Adult Education: [ed.sc.gov](http://ed.sc.gov)
  - South Carolina Educational Television Adult Education and GED Resources: [www.sctv.org/education/services-school-districts/adult-education](http://www.sctv.org/education/services-school-districts/adult-education)
  - Community Colleges in South Carolina: [www.collegesimply.com/colleges/south-carolina/community-colleges/](http://www.collegesimply.com/colleges/south-carolina/community-colleges/)
  - South Carolina Schools and ESL Programs: [eslgold.com/south\\_carolina/](http://eslgold.com/south_carolina/)

## **HIGH SCHOOL CREDENTIAL**

If you are ready for (or already taking) high school-level classes, your next step is to earn your high school credential. As an adult student, your high school credential can be a stepping-stone to a "higher education" degree or a better job, or simply an important personal achievement. This chapter will explain how you can earn your high school credential.

### **I'M READY FOR HIGH SCHOOL-LEVEL WORK. WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?**

There are two ways you can earn your high school credential:

1. Take a General Educational Development test to get your GED, OR
2. Complete a high school diploma program.
  - If you have already completed several high school courses, you might want to earn the rest of the credits in a high school diploma program.
  - If you have not completed many (or any) high school courses, getting a GED may be an easier option.
  - NOTE: Both adult high school programs and GED classes are offered for free in federal prisons,<sup>62</sup> South Carolina state prisons, and South Carolina county jails; and for low or cost free in adult school programs across the state. You will need to decide which pathway to a high school credential is best for you.

#### **HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAM REQUIREMENT ELIMINATED!**

Beginning with the graduating class of 2015, students are no longer required to meet exit exam requirements to earn a South Carolina high school diploma. If you attended school between the years of 1990 and 2014 and you did not receive a high school diploma because you did not pass the exit exam, you are eligible for a diploma if you met all other graduation criteria. Contact the school district where you attended high school if you think you qualify for a high school diploma.

## **GENERAL EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (GED) TESTS**

### **WHAT ARE GED TESTS? HOW CAN THEY HELP ME?**

A General Educational Development (GED) test is a high school proficiency test for adults who never completed high school and want to earn a high school equivalency diploma (GED).<sup>63</sup>

If you pass a GED test in South Carolina, you'll receive a South Carolina High School Equivalency Diploma (this is the official name for a GED in South Carolina). This diploma is your official proof that you have high school level academic skills. Once you have this diploma, you can apply to colleges and jobs that require a high school credential. You will need to take and pass the test for four different subject areas in order to get your GED.

### **AM I ELIGIBLE TO TAKE A GED TEST TO EARN MY SOUTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY DIPLOMA?**

In order to take a GED test to get your South Carolina High School Equivalency Diploma, you must:

<sup>61</sup> TABE stands for Tests of Adult Basic Education; CASAS stands for Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems. See U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL & ADULT EDUC., TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR FUTURE: GET THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING YOU NEED (2012), [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/take-charge-your-future.pdf](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/take-charge-your-future.pdf).

<sup>62</sup> 28 C.F.R. § 544.70 (federal inmates who do not have a GED or high school diploma are required to take adult literacy classes), § 544.81 (warden shall ensure every inmate with the need, capacity, and time has the opportunity to complete an adult literacy program leading toward a GED or high school diploma).

<sup>63</sup> S.C. Code Ann. § 59-43-25.



- Not have completed high school;
- Be a resident of South Carolina; AND
- Be 18 years or older (or below 18 under special circumstances).

### HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO EARN MY SCHSED?

It depends. Specifically, it will depend on your current skills, pace of study, and individual circumstances. You may choose to study on your own, at your own pace; or you may take one or more GED test preparation classes, which may be designed to get you ready by a specific date.

Compared to a high school diploma program, which may require a longer list of classes, the GED can be a “fast track” to a high school credential (for more information on high school diploma programs, see [PG. 28](#)). However, this may or may not be the best fit for you, depending on your needs and learning preferences.

### HOW MUCH WILL IT COST TO EARN MY SCHSED?

#### **If you’re currently incarcerated**

In a federal prison,<sup>64</sup> a South Carolina state prison, or a South Carolina county jail, you should be able to register for a GED test, take GED preparation classes, and get your SCHSED at no cost to you.

#### **If you’re formerly incarcerated:**

- When you sign up for a GED test, you must pay a **\$37.50 fee** for each module (subject-matter tests) you’re scheduling. That adds up to a **\$150 fee** if you register for all 4 modules at once.<sup>65</sup>
- When you pass the test (all 4 modules), you’ll get your diploma and official test results.
- Studying for the GED might require paying for classes and books, but this could cost little or nothing.

**NOTE:** Many adult schools and community colleges provide GED classes for free, and provide study materials for free as well. Others may charge registration and tuition fees. Check with each school about fees and financial assistance.

### HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE GED TEST?

**FIRST:** Learn as much as you can about the GED test. You should know: What subjects and skills does the test cover? How long does the test take? What do the questions look like? You can get information by contacting the GED Testing Service (see [PG. 28](#) for contact information), by asking teachers or tutors in a GED program, and by looking at GED practice tests and study materials (see below for tips on finding GED programs and study materials). Here is some general information to start with:

- The GED test has 4 modules (subject-matter tests): language arts, math, social studies, and science. You can take all 4 modules on the same day, which takes 7+ hours; or you can schedule them for separate dates.<sup>66</sup>
- As of January 1, 2014, the GED test is computer-based.

**SECOND:** Learn as much as possible about your readiness for the test. You should know:

- Which subjects or skills do you feel confident about, and which ones should you focus on improving?
- How comfortable do you feel with the test format?
- Do you need to practice answering test questions more quickly?
- What study methods are best for your current skills and learning style?
- You can get a sense of how ready you are by taking practice GED tests on your own, and/or by working with teachers or tutors in a GED program who can give you feedback about your skills (see below for tips on finding GED programs and study materials, including practice tests).

**THIRD:** Make use of teaching, tutoring, and study materials that are available to you. Below is general information about potential resources that you may be able to use:

#### **If you’re currently incarcerated:**

- **In a federal prison:** When you get to your federal facility, staff will review your county jail assessment information. If you don’t have a high school credential, you will be enrolled in classes designed to lead up

<sup>64</sup> 28 C.F.R. § 544.70 Federal inmates who do not have a GED or high school diploma are required to take adult literacy classes., § 544.81 Warden shall ensure every inmate with the need, capacity, and time has the opportunity to complete an adult literacy program leading toward a GED or high school diploma.

<sup>65</sup> GED TESTING SERV., [ged.com/policies/south\\_carolina/](http://ged.com/policies/south_carolina/).

<sup>66</sup> GED TESTING SERV., [ged.com/about\\_test/test\\_subjects/](http://ged.com/about_test/test_subjects/).



to a GED or a high school diploma (unless they decide that you must take Adult Basic Education classes first).<sup>67</sup> Ask your education advisor if you have questions about enrollment.

- **In a South Carolina state prison:** If you don't have a high school credential, you can enroll in GED classes if your TABE scores qualify you.<sup>68</sup> Ask your correctional counselor or education department staff about enrolling in GED classes. (Remember, before you enroll in GED classes, you must have a TABE score on file. See [PG. 21](#) for information about the TABE and getting an educational assessment).
- **In a South Carolina county jail:** If your educational assessment scores qualify you for GED courses, your facility should enroll you if they offer these courses. If not, you can contact community service organizations to request materials. See

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<sup>67</sup> If you do not have a high school credential, you will be required enroll in adult literacy classes (up to 240 hours, or until you earn a GED, whichever comes first). See U.S. DEP'T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, PROGRAM STATEMENT 5350.28 LITERACY PROGRAM (GED STANDARD) (Feb. 1, 2003); U.S. DEP'T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, PROGRAM STATEMENT 5300.21 EDUCATION TRAINING & LEISURE TIME (Feb. 18, 2001); U.S. DEP'T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, A DIRECTORY OF BUREAU OF PRISONS' NATIONAL PROGRAMS (May 21, 2014) at 3.

<sup>68</sup> See PS-08.01, MANDATORY EDUCATIONAL ATTENDANCE PROGRAM, JULY 1, 2001, [WWW.DOC.SC.GOV/POLICY/PS-08-01.HTM.PDF](http://WWW.DOC.SC.GOV/POLICY/PS-08-01.HTM.PDF).



- Appendix , [PG. 53](#) for a list of organizations that may provide GED materials.

**NOTE:** Even though most facilities in South Carolina at the federal, state, and county level offer GED classes, often there are long waiting lists to get in, or they are offered in “cycles” (which means that if you miss the beginning of the cycle, you cannot enroll until the next one). If you cannot enroll in a GED class for any reason, you should try to begin studying on your own. Check your facility’s library for GED “prep” books and materials. These resources will walk you through lesson plans, and usually contain sample questions and practice tests. They can also be ordered through most book distributors. Check with your facility for a list of book distributors that are approved to send materials to inmates. There are also a number of community adult literacy programs and other service organizations that will send books and materials to incarcerated people for free. You can contact these organizations to request the study materials you need. For a list of organizations that provide books and materials to incarcerated people, visit Urbana Campaign Books to Prisoners at [www.books2prisoners.org/partnerships.php](http://www.books2prisoners.org/partnerships.php) or see



Appendix , [PG. 53](#).

### HELPFUL HINT

#### *If Your Release Date Interferes with your GED Program in Prison or Jail:*

If you are preparing for a GED test while incarcerated and find out that you will be released before you finish your class or program, ask your GED teacher for a “progress report.” This report will show exactly where you are in the process, so that you can pick up your studies in the same place after your release.<sup>69</sup>

#### *If you’re formerly incarcerated:*

- Contact your local public library, adult school, or community college to ask about free or low-cost GED classes near you.<sup>70</sup>
- If you have Internet access, search online for GED programs near you.
- Try these resources to start:  
South Carolina Adult Education: [ed.sc.gov](http://ed.sc.gov)  
Community Colleges in South Carolina: [www.collegesimply.com/colleges/south-carolina/community-colleges/](http://www.collegesimply.com/colleges/south-carolina/community-colleges/)
- Contact the GED Testing Service for information and resources:
  - Call 1-877-EXAM-GED (877-392-6433) to get information about GED classes or test centers near you; or to request a practice test that you can score by yourself.
  - Call 1-877-EXAM-GED (877-392-6433) if you have specific questions about how the computer-based test works.<sup>71</sup>
  - Visit: [ged.com](http://ged.com).
- Visit your local public library or bookstore to find free or low-cost GED study materials.

### I’M READY TO TAKE A GED TEST. HOW DO I SIGN UP?

#### *If you’re currently incarcerated:*

- **In a federal prison:** Ask your educational advisor to sign you up. You should be able to take the test if the education staff thinks you’re ready based on your most recent assessment and/or your current work in class.<sup>72</sup>
- **In a South Carolina state prison:** First, sign up with your facility’s testing coordinator to take a GED practice test. Depending on your score, you may be scheduled for the next available GED test date at your facility, or you may be enrolled in a GED preparation program for further study. Ask your correctional counselor or education department staff if you have questions about GED classes or the GED practice test.

<sup>69</sup> U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC. OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL & ADULT EDUC., *Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training You Need* (2012) at 24.

<sup>70</sup> U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC. OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL & ADULT EDUC., *Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training You Need* (2012) at 23-28.

<sup>71</sup> GED TESTING SERV., [ged.com/faq/](http://ged.com/faq/).

<sup>72</sup> If you don’t have a high school credential, you must be enrolled in a literacy class; and you must participate until you’ve spent 240 hours in class or until you earn your GED, whichever comes first. 28 C.F.R. § 544.70-75; see U.S. DEP’T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, PROGRAM STATEMENT 5350.28 LITERACY PROGRAM (GED STANDARD) (Dec. 1, 2003); U.S. DEP’T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, PROGRAM STATEMENT 5300.21 EDUCATION TRAINING & LEISURE TIME (Feb. 18, 2002).



- **In a South Carolina county jail:** Ask the education staff at your facility to sign you up to take the test the next time it is offered (if it is offered at your facility).

**If you're formerly incarcerated:**

- Create an online account at [ged.com](http://ged.com) and then sign up for a specific test date at a specific GED test center. To complete your registration, you must pay the fee (\$37.50 per test module) using a credit card.
- To find out what GED test centers are near you, call the GED Testing Service at 1-877-EXAM-GED (877-392-6433). If you have Internet access, you can also use the search tool on the GED Testing Service website.<sup>73</sup>

**GENERAL TIPS**

- You may want to register for just 1 or 2 test modules at a time if you can't afford the full fee or if you want to give yourself time off between studying for the different subjects.<sup>74</sup>
- To take the test in South Carolina, you must provide a state-issued ID<sup>75</sup> and proof of South Carolina residency.<sup>76</sup> Before registering, ensure that you will have these documents on your test date. (You do not have to be a U.S. citizen or have an SSN to take the GED.<sup>77</sup>)
- If you have more questions, contact the South Carolina Department of Education Department of Adult Education office at (803) 734-8349. If you have Internet access, you can also find information posted online by the South Carolina Department of Education at [ed.sc.gov](http://ed.sc.gov)/<sup>78</sup> and the GED Testing Service.<sup>79</sup>

**ADULT HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROGRAMS**

This section will help you decide whether an adult high school diploma program is a good option for you. You'll also learn how to locate and sign up for an adult high school diploma program that meets your needs.

**WHAT IS AN ADULT HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROGRAM? HOW CAN IT HELP ME?**

These diploma programs are for adults who didn't finish high school, and who want to complete the courses normally required for high school graduation (instead of taking a GED test).<sup>80</sup> High school diploma programs are offered in most jails and prisons, and in adult schools and community colleges throughout South Carolina.<sup>81</sup>

In most adult high school diploma programs, you can choose to enroll in traditional classes, or to complete courses at your own pace through individual study and regular check-ins with teachers. In addition, some programs also allow you to complete correspondence courses through mail or email with teachers (for details on distance learning, see [PG. 40](#); for correspondence programs, see [PG. 42](#)).

**HOW MUCH TIME WILL IT TAKE TO EARN MY HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA?**

It depends. Specifically, it will depend on your current skills, pace of study, life circumstances, and learning preferences. Depending on the program you enroll in, you might work toward your diploma individually, at your own pace; or you might work with a teacher who creates assignment deadlines and a long-term schedule for you.

**GED VS. HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA**

Compared to a GED program, which may focus on preparing you to answer test questions quickly, a high school diploma program requires you to complete many classes that are part of a high school education. Required course subjects include: English (reading, writing, literature); math (algebra, geometry); natural science (biology, ecology, physics); social science (history, civics, economics); humanities (art, religion); and electives (health, media literacy).

<sup>73</sup> GED TESTING SERV., [ged.com/about\\_test/scheduling/](http://ged.com/about_test/scheduling/).

<sup>74</sup> Note: If you took any parts of the old paper-based GED before January 1, 2014, those scores no longer count. You must now take all four modules in the new computer-based format to earn your GED. See BGCBest GED Classes, *Do GED Scores Expire?* [bestgedclasses.org/do-ged-scores-expire/](http://bestgedclasses.org/do-ged-scores-expire/).

<sup>75</sup> Acceptable forms of ID include: South Carolina driver's license or ID card, passport, employment or work visa, green card, military or other government ID card, college ID card. See GED TESTING SERV., [ged.com/policies/south\\_carolina](http://ged.com/policies/south_carolina).

<sup>76</sup> Acceptable forms of proof include: utility bill, property tax bill, or apartment lease. See GED TESTING SERV., [ged.com/policies/south\\_carolina](http://ged.com/policies/south_carolina).

<sup>77</sup> See essential education, *Questions?* [www.passged.com/help#do-i-need-a-social-security-number-to-take-the-test](http://www.passged.com/help#do-i-need-a-social-security-number-to-take-the-test).

<sup>78</sup> S.C. DEP'T OF EDUCATION, <https://www.ed.sc.gov>.

<sup>79</sup> GED TESTING SERV., [ged.com](http://ged.com).

<sup>80</sup> U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC. OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL & ADULT EDUC., *Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training You Need* (2012) at 23-28.

<sup>81</sup> Adult schools are funded by the state and the national government. S.C. Code Ann. Title 59, S.C. DEP'T OF EDUCATION, [ed.sc.gov](http://ed.sc.gov).



## GENERAL TIPS

If you've already completed many of the courses required for a diploma program and have only a few left to take, an adult high school diploma program is likely a faster route for you than the GED.

If you haven't completed many high school courses, the GED will probably be a faster path to your high school credential.

**But consider**, if you have not taken many high school courses yet, and you have some time to spend on your high school education, you might prefer a diploma program because it can be an opportunity to explore new subjects and skills that you won't learn in a GED program.

**WARNING:** Watch out for scam programs, which will try to charge you money for a fake diploma.

## HOW MUCH MONEY WILL IT COST TO EARN MY HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA THROUGH A PROGRAM?

### **If you're currently incarcerated:**

- **In a federal prison:** As part of the Literacy Program, high school level classes should be available at no cost to you. However, not all facilities offer a high school diploma program; some offer GED study courses instead.<sup>82</sup>
- **In a South Carolina state prison:** A high school diploma program should be available at no cost to you.<sup>83</sup>
- **In a South Carolina county jail:** If your facility offers a high school diploma program, it should be available at no cost to you.

### **If you're formerly incarcerated:**

Adult high school diploma programs may be available in adult schools or community colleges near you for free or at low cost. Many schools provide adult high school classes for free, and provide books and materials for free as well. Others may charge registration and tuition fees. (However, schools that charge fees may also offer financial assistance to low-income students. Check with each school about fees and financial assistance.) Also, community adult literacy programs may offer high school diploma courses and tutoring for free.

*If you choose a distance learning or correspondence program*, regardless of whether you're incarcerated or in the community, you may need to pay program fees and buy your own materials (for details about distance learning programs in general, see [PG. 400](#)).



**WARNING:** Be careful when choosing a high school diploma program. In recent years, the federal government has shut down several degree programs that were charging money for fake diplomas.<sup>84</sup> These programs are scams. To avoid being scammed by a fake diploma program, watch out for the following clues<sup>85</sup>:

- If a program lets you get a diploma without taking classes or tests, it is probably fake.
- The program offers free tests or classes, but charges for the diploma itself. This is a dead giveaway that the program is illegitimate.
- The program claims to be affiliated with the federal government. The federal government does not offer high school diploma programs. Only the states approve such programs.

## HOW DO I FIND AND ENROLL IN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA PROGRAM?

### **If you're currently incarcerated:**

- **In a federal prison:** Soon after you enter prison, your Unit Team or Education Staff should review your assessment (from county jail, see [PG. 21](#)) and recommend classes for you. If you don't have a high school credential, the facility will enroll you in literacy classes designed to lead up to a high school diploma (or a GED, if your facility offers a GED program).<sup>86</sup> Ask your Education Advisor if you have questions about enrolling in classes.

<sup>82</sup> 28 C.F.R. § 544.70, Federal inmates who do not have a GED or high school diploma are required to take adult literacy classes. § 544.81 Warden shall ensure every inmate with the need, capacity, and time has the opportunity to complete and adult literacy program leading toward a GED or high school diploma.

<sup>83</sup> See PS-08.01, MANDATORY EDUCATIONAL ATTENDANCE PROGRAM, JULY 1, 2001, [www.doc.sc.gov/policy/PS-08-01.HTM.PDF](http://www.doc.sc.gov/policy/PS-08-01.HTM.PDF).

<sup>84</sup> FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION, *FTC Brings Two Actions Against Operators of Online 'High Schools'* (Feb. 10, 2016), <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/press-releases/2016/02/ftc-brings-two-actions-against-operators-online-high-schools>.

<sup>85</sup> FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION, CONSUMER INFORMATION, *High School Diploma Scams*, <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0539-high-school-diploma-scams>.

<sup>86</sup> If you're not fluent in English, you must be enrolled in ESL until you reach an 8<sup>th</sup> grade level in listening and reading comprehension. Also, if you don't have a high school credential, you must enroll in Adult Literacy classes until you log 240 hours of class time or until you earn a GED, whichever comes first. See U.S. DEP'T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, PROGRAM STATEMENT 5350.24 English-as-a-Second-Language Program (July 24, 1997); U.S. DEP'T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, PROGRAM STATEMENT 5350.28 LITERACY PROGRAM (GED STANDARD)



- **In a South Carolina state prison:** If you've completed some high school in the past, and if your current skills are at a high school grade level (9-12), you should be enrolled in the high school diploma program at your facility. Education Department staff will review your high school transcript (if you have one) and TABE scores and decide whether you can enroll.<sup>87</sup>
- **In a South Carolina county jail:** Check with your jail's education staff to find out whether high school diploma courses are offered and how to enroll.

#### **If you're formerly incarcerated:**

- Visit any public library or community bookstore to find free or low-cost high school level study materials, including books you may need for classes, as well as lessons you can work through on your own.
- Contact any public library, adult school, or community college to ask about free or low-cost adult high school diploma programs near you.
- If you have Internet access, search online for high school diploma programs near you:
  - South Carolina Adult Education: [ed.sc.gov](http://ed.sc.gov)

#### **HELPFUL HINT**

##### *Finding a High School Diploma Program*

- **TIP 1:** Many community colleges offer dual enrollment programs or continuing education programs, which allow you to earn an adult high school diploma or equivalency certificate AND get started on earning college credits at the same time.
- **TIP 2:** If you have meaningful school, work, or life experience, find out if you can make it count toward your diploma. Some adult schools or programs might give you credit for past high school work, job training, work experience, community service, military service, or self-study. Ask the individual school or program if it will do this.<sup>88</sup>

## **HIGHER EDUCATION OVERVIEW**

*Once you've earned your high school credential, what's next? It's time to revisit your long-term educational and career goals. Do you need a certain skill-set or type of training for your desired career field? Do you have to earn a specific degree to practice in your chosen profession? If so, "higher education" might be right for you.*

### **WHAT IS HIGHER EDUCATION?**

"Higher education" refers to additional schooling that you take beyond the high school-level, that leads to a professional certification or academic degree, such as a Career and Technical Education (CTE) certificate, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, or graduate or professional degree. If you plan on continuing your education beyond the high school-level, you will need to determine which higher education path fits your needs and goals.

## **CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) PROGRAMS**

### **WHAT IS CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION?**

If you want a skills-based job in a particular career field, you may want to enroll in a CTE program where you focus on learning to do a specific type of work in that field. CTE programs are also called "certificate" or "vocational training" programs.<sup>89</sup> This chapter will help you think about whether a CTE program is a good choice for you; and, if so, what type of CTE program might be right for you.

#### **HELPFUL HINT**

Most CTE programs lead to a *certificate*, but some lead to a *college degree*. This section focuses on CTE programs that lead to a *certificate*. If you're interested in enrolling in a CTE program that leads to a *college degree*, you will find more helpful information in the following section on college degrees (PG. 32).

#### **WHAT TYPE OF VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE?**

CTE programs commonly cover fields such as: agriculture and natural resources, arts and media, building and construction, education and child/family services, energy and utilities, fashion and design, finance and business, health science and medical technology, hospitality and tourism, information technology, manufacturing and product development, marketing and sales, public services, or transportation services.

(Dec. 1, 2003); U.S. DEP'T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, PROGRAM STATEMENT 5300.21, EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND LEISURE TIME PROGRAM STANDARDS (Feb. 18, 2002); U.S. DEP'T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, *A Directory of National Programs* (May 18, 2017), [www.bop.gov/inmates/custody\\_and\\_care/docs/20170518\\_BOPNationalProgramCatalog.pdf](http://www.bop.gov/inmates/custody_and_care/docs/20170518_BOPNationalProgramCatalog.pdf).

<sup>87</sup> PS-08.01, "MANDATORY EDUCATIONAL ATTENDANCE PROGRAM," JULY 1, 2001, [www.doc.sc.gov/POLICY/PS-08-01.HTM.PDF](http://www.doc.sc.gov/POLICY/PS-08-01.HTM.PDF).

<sup>88</sup> N.Y. TIMES, Rachel Aviv, *Turning Experience Into College Credit*, (Oct. 30, 2008), [www.nytimes.com/2008/11/02/education/edlife/strategy.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/02/education/edlife/strategy.html); cael, *A Brighter Future Through Credit for Hire Learning*; [www.cael.org/lp/pla](http://www.cael.org/lp/pla).

<sup>89</sup> FED. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, *Certificates: A Fast Track to Career*, OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK QUARTERLY (Winter 2012-13), [www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2012/winter/art01.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2012/winter/art01.pdf).



## HOW CAN A CTE PROGRAM HELP ME?

In South Carolina, CTE programs are offered at community colleges, technical colleges, trade schools, vocational schools, at some 4-year colleges—and in many SCDC facilities and county jails. A CTE certification program can be a good path for you if the occupation you want *requires* a certificate, or if you want to gain practical skills and get into the workforce more quickly. Most CTE certificate programs are designed to get you certified, licensed, and hired in your chosen field directly and efficiently. A certificate can also be a stepping-stone toward a college degree, as some colleges accept certificate program credits and count them as progress toward a college degree.



**IMPORTANT: A certificate is NOT a degree. It's an award that shows you completed an educational or training program after high school. A certificate is also NOT an occupational license or certification, which you may need to do your job, depending on what your field is and where you live.**

The cost of earning a certificate through a CTE program may not be worth it in certain fields where jobs are low-wage, unstable, and difficult to get. Also, if employers in your desired field don't always require a certificate, you might consider going straight into the workforce. If employers in your field like to see qualifications other than a certificate, such as hands-on experience or some kind of degree, you might want to pursue those qualifications instead.<sup>90</sup>

**NOTE:** Usually, community or technical colleges require that you have a high school credential before you begin a CTE program. However, even if you don't have one, you still may be able to enroll. Most community and technical colleges will have classes and support to help you earn your high school credential as well as your CTE certificate. If the CTE program you are interested in is offered at a four-year college or university, you will need to have a high school credential to apply.

## HOW MUCH TIME WILL IT TAKE TO EARN A CTE CERTIFICATE?

Many certificate programs can take less than a year to complete, and most are designed to take less than 2 years. However, your total time in a program will depend on the specific program and school you choose and whether you enroll part-time or full time.

### HELPFUL HINT CERTIFICATES, LICENSES, AND CERTIFICATIONS

A **certificate** is not the same as an occupational license or a professional certification. A certificate shows that you have completed a course of study and training in a particular field. Certificates are awarded by CTE programs and many certificate programs can take less than a year to complete, and most are designed to take less than 2 years.<sup>91</sup> However, your total time in a program will depend on the specific program and school you choose, and whether you enroll part-time or full time in school. After earning a certificate, you may also need to get a license from the state or a certification from the professional organization that regulates your job field.

A **license** shows that you have the government's permission to practice your occupation. State and local boards and agencies issue licenses.

A **certification** means that you have demonstrated that you're skilled enough to practice your occupation, usually by-passing evaluations and/or documenting a certain amount of work experience. Professional or industry organizations issue certifications.<sup>92</sup>

## HOW MUCH MONEY WILL IT COST TO EARN A CTE CERTIFICATE?

### **If you're currently incarcerated:**

In a federal prison,<sup>93</sup> South Carolina state prison, or South Carolina county jail, any CTE programs available should be provided at no cost to you (including necessary materials and credentialing fees).

### **If you're formerly incarcerated:**

Your costs will vary based on your school, program, and course load. If you're a resident of the state where you enroll, the cheapest options will likely be programs offered at community colleges or technical colleges, which

<sup>90</sup> FED. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, *Certificates: A Fast Track to Career*, OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK QUARTERLY (Winter 2012-13) [www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2012/winter/art01.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2012/winter/art01.pdf).

<sup>91</sup> FED. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, *Certificates: A Fast Track to Career*, OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK QUARTERLY (WINTER 2012-13) [www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2012/winter/art01.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2012/winter/art01.pdf). Some CTE programs are designed to take up to 2 years and lead to an associate's degree instead of a certificate. See U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC. OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL & ADULT EDUC., *Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training You Need* (2012), [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/take-charge-your-future.pdf](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/take-charge-your-future.pdf).

<sup>92</sup> FED. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, *Certificates: A Fast Track to Career*, OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK QUARTERLY (Winter 2012-13).

<sup>93</sup> U.S. DEP'T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, PROGRAM STATEMENT 5300.21, EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND LEISURE TIME PROGRAM STANDARDS (Feb. 18, 2002); U.S. DEP'T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, *A Directory of National Programs* (May 18, 2017), [www.bop.gov/inmates/custody\\_and\\_care/docs/20170518\\_BOPNationalProgramCatalog.pdf](http://www.bop.gov/inmates/custody_and_care/docs/20170518_BOPNationalProgramCatalog.pdf).



are public schools. Private colleges and universities tend to cost more. (See [PG. 18](#) for tips on avoiding private schools that may be scams.)

**NOTE:** Some schools and programs offer financial aid for low-income students. Check with each school and program about overall costs, fee waivers, and financial aid. For more information on fee waivers and financial aid, see *Paying for Your Education*, starting on [PG. 45](#).

## HOW DO I FIND CTE PROGRAMS?

### *If you're currently incarcerated...*

**In a federal prison:** Federal prisons offer a different range of Occupational Education (OE) programs, which may include certificate programs as well as programs leading to associate's degrees.<sup>94</sup> Soon after you enter prison, your Unit Team and Education Staff should give you an assessment and recommend programs for you. If you have no stable work history or training record, you may be assigned to an OE program.<sup>95</sup> If you haven't been assigned to an OE program and would like to be, ask your Unit Team to place you in one. Your Unit Team will decide what OE course(s) may be right for you.<sup>96</sup>

*Note on eligibility & timing:* Certain OE programs may be open to you only if you have a high school credential or are working toward one.<sup>97</sup>

**In a South Carolina state prison:** Every SCDC facility provides a different range of CTE programs, all accredited by a nationally recognized agency. (For information on accreditation, see [PG. 17](#).) Since these CTE programs are properly accredited, you should be able to transfer credits from these programs to a college degree program. (For information on transferring credits, see [PG. 40](#).) There is no eligibility or testing requirements for CTE programs in SCDC facilities, but you will be limited by what programs your facility has available.<sup>98</sup> Ask your Correctional Counselor about what CTE programs are offered and how you can sign up.

**In a South Carolina county jail:** Because programs vary greatly across county facilities, you will need to check with your facility's education department to see if CTE programs are available.

### *If you're formerly incarcerated*

CTE programs are offered at community and technical colleges as well as four-year colleges. To find CTE programs in your area:

- Check your local public library for information about CTE programs, adult schools, and colleges in your area.
- Search on the Internet for nearby schools and programs. The following websites are good starting points:
  - *Community Colleges in South Carolina:* [www.usnews.com/education/community-colleges/south-carolina](http://www.usnews.com/education/community-colleges/south-carolina)
  - South Carolina Adult Education: [ed.sc.gov](http://ed.sc.gov)
  - South Carolina Educational Television Adult Education and GED Resources: [www.sctv.org/AdultEd-GED-Resources](http://www.sctv.org/AdultEd-GED-Resources)

## HOW DO I CHOOSE A CTE PROGRAM?

If you want to make an informed decision, it's important to research the qualifications required for the jobs you want, the quality of the schools you're considering, and the current state of the job market.<sup>99</sup> (For tips on researching the qualifications you need for the specific job(s) you want, see *Setting Your Goals*, [PG. 10](#).) When you know what skills and training you need, you can begin evaluating individual CTE programs to find the one that is right for you. If you have decided that a CTE program is the best path for you, see *How To Choose The Educational Path That Meets Your Specific Educational Goals*, [PG. 17](#), for tips on evaluating and choosing a program.

<sup>94</sup> U.S. DEP'T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, *Program Statement 5353.01: Occupational Education Programs* (Dec. 17, 2003) Note: Metropolitan correctional centers, metropolitan/federal detention centers, the federal transportation center, and administrative maximum facility are exempt from providing occupational education programs. DEP'T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, *A Directory of National Programs* (May 18, 2017).

<sup>95</sup> U.S. DEP'T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, *Program Statement 5300.21: Education, Training, and Leisure Time Program Standards* (Feb. 18, 2002), [www.bop.gov/policy/progstat/5300\\_021.pdf](http://www.bop.gov/policy/progstat/5300_021.pdf). Otherwise, if you're able to work, you should be assigned to a paid institution job. See 28 C.F.R. pt. 545, subpt. C; U.S. DEP'T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, *Program Statement 5251.06: Inmate Work & Performance Pay* (Oct. 1, 2008), [www.bop.gov/policy/progstat/5251\\_006.pdf](http://www.bop.gov/policy/progstat/5251_006.pdf).

<sup>96</sup> U.S. DEP'T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, *Program Statement 5353.01: Occupational Educational Programs* (Dec. 17, 2003) [www.bop.gov/policy/progstat/5353\\_001.pdf](http://www.bop.gov/policy/progstat/5353_001.pdf).

<sup>97</sup> U.S. DEP'T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, *Program Statement 5300.21: Education, Training, and Leisure Time Program Standards* (Feb. 18, 2002), [www.bop.gov/policy/progstat/5300\\_021.pdf](http://www.bop.gov/policy/progstat/5300_021.pdf).

<sup>98</sup> SOUTH CAROLINA DEP'T OF CORRECTIONS, DIVISION OF PROGRAMS, REENTRY, AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES, <http://www.doc.sc.gov/programs/programs.html>.

<sup>99</sup> FED. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, *Certificates: A Fast Track to Career*, OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK QUARTERLY (Winter 2012-13), [www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2012/winter/art01.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2012/winter/art01.pdf).



## HOW DO I ENROLL IN A CTE PROGRAM?

Generally, to enroll in a CTE program at a community or technical college, you just need to fill out the paperwork and register for classes. Most programs have “open admissions,” meaning that if you meet the educational requirements, you will be admitted automatically, if space is available. For programs that are very popular, you may have to submit an application and be accepted to the program before you can enroll (admission is not automatic). To learn more about program requirements and enrollment policies, you can call the admissions office of the school you are interested in. This information is also usually available on the school’s website.

Four-year colleges generally require you to submit an application for admission and be accepted to the school before you can enroll and register for classes. Applications often are available online (and can be submitted online), or you can call the school’s admissions office and ask them to send you an application by regular mail or email. There is usually a nonrefundable fee for applying, but you may be able to get the fee waived.

### Other Options for Career and Technical Training:

- **Apprenticeships:** These are usually offered through trade unions that pay you a salary while you learn a specific trade or profession. Apprenticeships allow you to gain knowledge and hands-on experience in your chosen field, under the guidance of more experienced employees. Many federal and state facilities offer apprenticeships through contracts with colleges and technical schools, and many are registered through the Department of Labor’s Office of Apprenticeship.<sup>100</sup> For more information on apprenticeship programs, check these resources:
  - U.S. Department of Labor’s Office of Apprenticeship at [www.doleta.gov/oa/](http://www.doleta.gov/oa/);
  - CareerOneStop at [www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org).
- **Job Corps:** Job Corps offers young people aged 16-24 the chance to get a free education and skills training while being paid a monthly allowance. Usually Job Corps participants live at a Job Corps residence while getting their training. To learn more about Job Corps and find the Job Corps center near you, call 1-800 - 733-5627 or go to [www.jobcorps.gov](http://www.jobcorps.gov).

## COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC DEGREES

If you have the desire, time, and financial resources to explore a wider range of academic subjects and skills, you may want to pursue a college degree. In college you can study a diverse range of topics, instead of focusing only on the skills you need for one type of job; and you can develop a broad foundation of writing and critical thinking skills to sharpen your mind and prepare you for a wide variety of careers.<sup>101</sup> A college degree may also help you qualify for more secure, higher-status, and better-paying jobs.<sup>102</sup>

### If you’re currently incarcerated:

You likely do not have access to in-person college programs, but you may be able to pursue a college degree through Distance Education. (See [PG. 40](#) for information on Distance Education programs.)

### If you’re formerly incarcerated:

You can pursue a college degree at a community or junior college, a technical school, or 4-year college or university. While college can be expensive,<sup>103</sup> there are ways to reduce and supplement the expense (see *Paying For College*, [PG. 45](#)).<sup>104</sup>

<sup>100</sup> U.S. DEP’T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, A Directory of National Programs (May 18, 2017), [www.bop.gov/inmates/custody\\_and\\_care/docs/BOPNationalProgramCatalog.pdf](http://www.bop.gov/inmates/custody_and_care/docs/BOPNationalProgramCatalog.pdf).

<sup>101</sup> SCHOLARSHIPS.COM, *Why Go to College?*, [www.scholarships.com/resources/college-prep/preparing-for-college/why-go-to-college/](http://www.scholarships.com/resources/college-prep/preparing-for-college/why-go-to-college/).

<sup>102</sup> FED. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, *Education Still Pays*, [www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2014/data-on-display/print/education-still-pays.htm](http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2014/data-on-display/print/education-still-pays.htm).

<sup>103</sup> SCHOLARSHIPS.COM, *Why Students Don’t Go to College*, [www.scholarships.com/resources/college-prep/preparing-for-college/why-students-dont-go-to-college/](http://www.scholarships.com/resources/college-prep/preparing-for-college/why-students-dont-go-to-college/).

<sup>104</sup> FED. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, *Paying for College: Strategies to Afford Higher Education Today*, OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK QUARTERLY (Spring 2013), [www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2013/spring/art01.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2013/spring/art01.pdf).



## IS GOING TO COLLEGE THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR ME?

PROS:	CONS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be a time to explore new and different areas of study.</li> <li>• Can help you build social and professional networks with classmates and instructors.</li> <li>• Can help you develop reading, writing, and analytical skills that are useful for many careers, and in daily life.</li> <li>• Can prepare and qualify you for better jobs, increase your chances of getting hired, and boost your wages in the long run.</li> <li>• Can prepare and qualify you for graduate or professional study, which may lead to even better jobs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be time consuming and may delay your entry into the workforce.</li> <li>• College campus life can be distracting and overwhelming.</li> <li>• Academic coursework may not give you the specialized technical skills and training you need for certain careers.</li> <li>• A college degree is not necessary or even helpful in some career fields.</li> <li>• Can be very expensive—if you take out loans to pay for school, you may end up with a lot of debt.</li> </ul>

Depending on your career goals, your life situation, and your access to resources like financial aid, college may or may not be the best option for you now. The following sections of this chapter will provide details about the different types of college degree programs so that you can make an informed decision.

### WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF ACADEMIC DEGREES?

There are three main categories of college degrees:

- Associate's degrees
- Bachelor's degrees
- Graduate, Academic, and Professional degrees.

Different degrees are awarded in different subject and career areas, and they all have different requirements. For some degrees you have to earn another degree first, before you can pursue your career. The various degrees are discussed in detail below.

### **ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE PROGRAMS**

#### WHAT IS AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE?

An associate's degree (sometimes called a "two-year" degree) is an undergraduate college degree that is awarded by community and junior colleges (sometimes called "two-year colleges"), technical schools, and some four-year colleges and universities. Associate's degree programs are designed to take two years of full-time study to complete (but part-time students are eligible, but may take longer to complete the program), and generally require students to take various general education courses like English, math, and science. An associate's degree can be a stepping-stone toward earning a bachelor's degree or can prepare you to enter the workforce directly.<sup>105</sup>

#### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE ADVANTAGES OF PURSUING AN ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE?

An Associate's Degree is a great option for many people because:

- It can be earned in only two years;
- It costs less than a four-year degree;
- It gets you into the workforce faster;
- The programs are more flexible, and can be scheduled around work or other obligations;
- It can be a low-cost stepping stone to a 4-year college or university, if you transfer credits (see [PG. 39](#) for more information on transferring credits).

#### WHAT TYPES OF ASSOCIATE'S DEGREES ARE THERE?

There are two categories of associate's degrees:

- Associate of Arts (AA)/Associate of Science (AS)
- Associate of Applied Arts (AAA)/Associate of Applied Science (AAS).

**AA and AS degree programs** tend to be designed for students who eventually want to earn a bachelor's degree at a four-year college or university. Therefore, these programs focus more on preparing students for higher

<sup>105</sup> COLLEGE BOARD, *Quick Guide: Your College Degree Options*, [www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/college-101/quick-guide-your-college-degree-options](http://www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/college-101/quick-guide-your-college-degree-options).



levels of academic study. The courses offered and credits earned in an AA or AS program are meant to be easily transferred to a four-year college. (See [PG. 40](#) for information on transferring credits.)

The “Applied” degrees (AAA and AAS), on the other hand, are more geared toward preparing students for a particular career. Therefore, these programs emphasize more technical and vocational skills. AAA’s and AAS’s are the college degree equivalent of CTE certificates.<sup>106</sup>

## HOW CAN I DECIDE IF AN ASSOCIATE’S DEGREE IS RIGHT FOR ME, AND WHICH TYPE I SHOULD GET?

An AA or AS degree may be a good choice if your main priority is not just to gain practical job skills, but also to sharpen your academic skills, explore diverse areas of study, and engage in critical analysis. They may also be a good choice if you intend to continue on to get your bachelor’s degree, but you want to save on costs. When you transfer your AA or AS credits to a four-year college, you can get up to half of the required credits for your bachelor’s degree at a fraction of the cost.<sup>107</sup>

An AAA or AAS degree may be a good choice for you if you want to learn technical skills for a specific occupation, but you also want to have a college degree (not just a certificate). These degrees are also good if you want the technical, practical skills to work now, but you think that you might eventually want to get a higher college degree.<sup>108</sup>

## HOW MUCH WILL IT COST TO EARN AN ASSOCIATE’S DEGREE?

The cost of earning an Associate’s Degree varies greatly depending on the institution that you enroll in.

- In South Carolina, public community colleges are among the most economical choices for earning a college degree.
- Private community colleges and four-year colleges are the most expensive options (costs vary greatly, but may be several thousands of dollars).



**IMPORTANT: Tuition or per-unit fees do not include other costs associated with enrolling in a college program such as books, school supplies, and transportation.**

## HOW DO I FIND AN ASSOCIATE’S DEGREE PROGRAM?

### *If you’re currently incarcerated:*

**In a federal prison:** Federal correctional facilities offer Associate’s Degrees through the Occupational Education Program.<sup>109</sup> Programs vary by facility, so check your Unit Team to find out what Associate’s Degree programs are available in your facility.<sup>110</sup>

**In a South Carolina state prison:** In SCDC facilities, your options may vary. Some facilities may have on-site degree programs, while others may allow Distance Learning. (see [PG. 40](#) for more information) or correspondence courses (see [PG. 42](#) for more information).

**In a South Carolina county jail:** Education programs vary greatly across county facilities. You will need to check with your facility’s education department to see if any Associate’s Degree programs are offered. (Note: Because of the time commitment required by college degree programs, many county jail facilities, which generally house people only for limited periods of time, may not offer them.)

### *If you’re formerly incarcerated:*

- Research schools and programs at your local public library
- Visit South Carolina Works (SCWORKS) (see [PG. 7](#) for information on SCWORKS)
- Search for your local community college on the Internet:  
U.S. News Community Colleges in South Carolina at [www.usnews.com/education/community-colleges/south-carolina](http://www.usnews.com/education/community-colleges/south-carolina)
- South Carolina Technical College System at [www.sctechsystem.com/](http://www.sctechsystem.com/)

<sup>106</sup> Olivia Crosby, *Associate Degree: Two Years to a Career or a Jump Start to a Bachelor’s Degree*, OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK QUARTERLY, Winter 2002-03, [www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2002/winter/art01.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2002/winter/art01.pdf).

<sup>107</sup> Olivia Crosby, *Associate Degree: Two Years to a Career or a Jump Start to a Bachelor’s Degree*, OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK QUARTERLY, Winter 2002-03, [www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2002/winter/art01.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2002/winter/art01.pdf).

<sup>108</sup> Olivia Crosby, *Associate Degree: Two Years to a Career or a Jump Start to a Bachelor’s Degree*, OCCUPATIONAL OUTLOOK QUARTERLY, Winter 2002-03, [www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2002/winter/art01.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2002/winter/art01.pdf).

<sup>109</sup> U.S. DEP’T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, *Program Statement 5353.01: Occupational Education Programs* (Dec. 17, 2003) [www.bop.gov/policy/progstat/5353\\_001.pdf](http://www.bop.gov/policy/progstat/5353_001.pdf). Note: All correctional institutions must provide occupational education programs to all inmates with vocational training needs. Metropolitan correctional centers, metropolitan/federal detention centers, the federal transportation center, and administrative maximum facility are exempt from providing occupational education programs.

<sup>110</sup> U.S. DEP’T JUSTICE FED. BUREAU OF PRISONS, *Program Statement 5353.01: Occupational Education Programs* (Dec. 17, 2003) [www.bop.gov/policy/progstat/5353\\_001.pdf](http://www.bop.gov/policy/progstat/5353_001.pdf).



## **BACHELOR'S DEGREE PROGRAMS**

### **WHAT IS A BACHELOR'S DEGREE? HOW CAN IT HELP ME?**

Bachelor's degrees are offered by four-year colleges and universities. Bachelor's degree programs are designed to take four years of full-time study to complete, however, many students choose to complete them in five years, and part-time students may take even longer. Students are required to take a variety of general education courses, plus several courses in a specific area of study called a major, that the student chooses. A Bachelor's degree can be a stepping-stone toward earning a graduate or professional degree, and is required for many high-salary, high-status jobs.<sup>111</sup>

PROS:	CONS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualifies you for jobs across more professional fields (for example, engineering, architecture, accounting)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generally, no "open admissions"—requirements are extensive, and competition can be fierce</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May increase your competitiveness in the job market for higher-level, better-paying jobs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Courses are academically rigorous, and may be difficult for people who have been out of school for a long time</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Qualifies you to pursue graduate, academic, and professional degrees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class schedules tend to be less flexible, making it harder to juggle other obligations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Makes you eligible for more scholarships and grants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Programs can be expensive—higher tuition and fees can lead to more student debt</li> </ul>

### **WHAT TYPES OF BACHELOR'S DEGREES ARE THERE?**

There are two main kinds of Bachelor's degrees: Bachelor of Arts (BA) degrees and Bachelor of Science (BS) degrees.<sup>112</sup> BA's are awarded for programs of study that focus on areas within the liberal arts, humanities, or social studies (such as English, Art, or History). BS's are awarded for programs of study that focus on areas within the "hard" sciences, such as Math, Engineering, or Computer Technology.<sup>113</sup>

### **HOW MUCH WILL IT COST TO EARN A BACHELOR'S DEGREE?**

Bachelor's degrees from four-year colleges and universities are expensive. They can cost in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. Most people require financial assistance from federal or state student aid programs, or from private organizations to pay their tuition. (For information on *Paying for College*, see [PG. 45.](#))

#### ***A NOTE ON PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE SCHOOLS***

Both public and private colleges and universities offer Bachelor's degree programs. **Public schools** are partially funded by government taxes and usually charge lower tuition (especially for in-state residents). They tend to have a larger student population and larger class sizes. **Private schools** are generally more expensive, and tend to focus on keeping classes small and exposing students to many different subjects.<sup>114</sup>

**A NOTE ABOUT IN-STATE TUITION:** Most schools require that you have lived in South Carolina for a certain period of time in order to get the discounted "resident" or "in-state" tuition rate.<sup>115</sup> Some schools may consider time that you spent incarcerated in South Carolina towards this requirement. Check with your school's admissions and financial aid offices to find out if your period of incarceration qualifies you as a South Carolina resident under that school's policy.

### **HOW DO I FIND A BACHELOR'S DEGREE PROGRAM?**

#### **If you're currently incarcerated**

- Earn college credits.** You can earn college credits while you are incarcerated which can be applied toward a four-year degree after you are released. (For information on how to earn college credits while

<sup>111</sup> U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC. OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL & ADULT EDUC., *Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training You Need* (2012), [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/take-charge-your-future.pdf](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/pi/AdultEd/take-charge-your-future.pdf). See also COLLEGE BOARD, Quick Guide: Your College Degree Options, [www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/college-101/quick-guide-your-college-degree-options](http://www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/college-101/quick-guide-your-college-degree-options).

<sup>112</sup> Most Bachelor's degrees fall into one of these two categories, however there are a number of specialized Bachelor's degrees such as Bachelor of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Architecture.

<sup>113</sup> MY DEGREE GUIDE, BA VS. BS - WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? [WWW.MYDEGREEGUIDE.COM/TYPES-OF-DEGREES/BA-VS-BS/](http://WWW.MYDEGREEGUIDE.COM/TYPES-OF-DEGREES/BA-VS-BS/).

<sup>114</sup> MY COLLEGE OPTIONS, *Public v. Private Colleges*, [www.mycollegeoptions.org/Core/SiteContent/Students/Advice/College-Resource-Center/College-Search---Selection/College-Choices/Public-Vs-Private-Colleges.aspx](http://WWW.MYCOLLEGEOPTIONS.ORG/Core/SiteContent/Students/Advice/College-Resource-Center/College-Search---Selection/College-Choices/Public-Vs-Private-Colleges.aspx); Erika Ward, *Private v. Public College: Which is Best for Me?*, CAMPUS EXPLORER, <http://www.campusexplorer.com/college-advice-tips/C6F3EE61/Private-vs-Public-College-Which-is-Best-For-Me/>.

<sup>115</sup> South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, Frequently Asked Questions Regarding South Carolina Residency, at [www.che.sc.gov/CHE\\_Docs/StudentServices/Residency/QASCR residency.pdf](http://www.che.sc.gov/CHE_Docs/StudentServices/Residency/QASCR residency.pdf).



you are incarcerated, see Associate's Degree Programs, [PG. 35](#), and Distance Education, [PG. 40](#). For information on how to transfer college credits that you earn while you are incarcerated, see [PG. 39](#). For information on how to tell if a school or program is a scam, see [PG. 17](#).) Also, check out the Claflin University Pathways from Prison Program. The South Carolina Department of Corrections has partnered with Claflin University in Orangeburg, South Carolina to give individuals who are incarcerated, the opportunity to earn bachelor's degrees: [www.claflin.edu/academics-research/special-programs-and-opportunities/claflin-university-center-for-social-justice/claflin-university-pathways-from-prison-program](http://www.claflin.edu/academics-research/special-programs-and-opportunities/claflin-university-center-for-social-justice/claflin-university-pathways-from-prison-program).

- **Plan and prepare.** There is plenty you can do to plan and prepare for your post-release education while you are still incarcerated. You can research schools (see [PG. 17](#)), complete applications (see [PG. 38](#)), take placement tests (see [PG. 21](#)), and apply for financial aid (see [PG. 45](#)).

#### **If you're formerly incarcerated**

- Visit your public library and ask the librarian to show you to the section on college guides.
- Search colleges and universities on the Internet. You can search based on location, cost, program or degree options, or rankings.
  - The College Board: [collegesearch.collegeboard.org/home](http://collegesearch.collegeboard.org/home); [www.campusexplorer.com/4-year-colleges-and-universities](http://www.campusexplorer.com/4-year-colleges-and-universities);
  - NICHE: [www.niche.com](http://www.niche.com).



## APPLYING TO COLLEGE

If you have decided that you want to apply to a four-year college or university, there are several documents you will need to gather or prepare, as well as other tasks you will need to complete before you apply.

### WHAT WILL I NEED TO APPLY FOR COLLEGE?

You will need the following important documents:

- The Application (see [PG. 38](#))
- Fee Payment or Fee Waiver Form (see [PG. 38](#))
- High School Credential (see [PG. 25](#))
- Transcripts for any high school or college coursework you've done (see [PG. 13](#))
- Letters of Recommendation and personal references (see [PG. 39](#))
- College Admissions Test Scores (see [PG. 38](#))
- Immunization/Vaccination Records (see [PG. 9](#))

#### *The Application:*

Depending on the program and the school you are applying to, there may be a formal school-specific application you must complete or there may be a general application that is good for several schools. This will depend on the school you are applying to, so be sure to ask whether there is a specific application you must complete or if there is a general application available.

#### *Fee Payment or Fee Waiver:*

Almost all schools require a payment in order to process your application. This fee may range anywhere from \$0–\$90. But don't be discouraged! Many schools also offer fee waivers. To see whether or not you qualify for a fee waiver, first look at the school's website and see if you can find information as to how to apply for a fee waiver. You may also call the school's admission office and ask for one directly. But be sure to do this EARLY as many schools may run out of the number of fee waivers they can provide to students. If you receive a fee waiver, you do not have to pay this application fee but instead will include proof of the waiver with your application.

#### *College Admissions Tests:*

SAT & ACT. The SAT and ACT are standardized college admissions tests. Almost everyone who applies to a four-year college or university must take one of these tests. Schools use applicants' scores on these exams to make admissions decisions. The SAT covers math, reading, and writing, and focuses more on vocabulary and how well you can reason. It's more popular with private schools, and with schools on the East and West coasts.<sup>116</sup> The ACT covers math, English, science, and reading, and focuses more on how much you know about the subjects being tested. It's more popular with public schools, and with schools in the South and the Midwest. (For more details on ACT policies, visit <http://www.studypoint.com/ed/act-vs-sat/>.)<sup>117</sup>

### HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO TAKE THESE TESTS?

The registration fee for the 2022 SAT is \$50.00.<sup>118</sup> The registration fee for the ACT is \$60.00 for the full test without the writing portion, and \$80.00 for the full test with the writing portion.<sup>119</sup> Before you sign up for either test, confirm which test the school you are applying to accepts, and whether it requires you to take the full test.

### HOW DO I SIGN UP FOR THESE TESTS?

#### *If you're currently incarcerated:*

- The SAT has no established procedure for allowing people who are incarcerated to take the test. You should check with your facility's Education Department to see if you can arrange to take the SAT. On the other hand, the ACT specifically allows people who are incarcerated to register for and take the test. This is called "arranged testing." To ask for arranged testing, you will need to get and submit ACT's "Request for Arranged Testing" form. You can get a copy of this form by calling the ACT Arranged Testing Line at (319) 337-1510, by writing to ACT Arranged Testing, 301 ACT Drive, P.O. Box 168, Iowa City, IA 52243-0168, or emailing ACT at [arranged@act.org](mailto:arranged@act.org).

#### WHAT IF I CAN'T TAKE IT BECAUSE I AM INCARCERATED?

If you are unable to take the SAT or ACT while you are incarcerated, you can still study and prepare for either test so that you are ready to be tested as soon as you are released.

<sup>116</sup> COLLEGEBOARD, *The SAT*, [satsuite.collegeboard.org/sat](https://satsuite.collegeboard.org/sat); STUDY POINTS, *ACT vs. SAT: Key Differences between the ACT and the SAT*, [www.studypoint.com/ed/act-vs-sat/](http://www.studypoint.com/ed/act-vs-sat/).

<sup>117</sup> STUDY POINTS, *ACT vs. SAT: Key Differences between the ACT and the SAT*, [www.studypoint.com/ed/act-vs-sat/](http://www.studypoint.com/ed/act-vs-sat/).

<sup>118</sup> COLLEGEBOARD, *Test Fees*, [collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/fees](https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/fees).

<sup>119</sup> ACT, *Current ACT Fees and Services*, [www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration/fees.html](https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/registration/fees.html).



- This form is also available online at [www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/arranged.pdf](http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/arranged.pdf) (if you have someone who can download it for you).<sup>120</sup>

**If you're formerly incarcerated:**

- SAT—You can register online at [collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register](http://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register).<sup>121</sup> You can also request a paper registration form by writing to College Board SAT Program P.O. Box 7502, London, KY 40742-7502, or by calling (866) 756-7346.<sup>122</sup>
- ACT—You can register online at [www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act.html](http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act.html),<sup>123</sup> You can also request a Register-By-Mail packet by filling out an application online at [forms.act.org/student/stud\\_req.html?\\_ga=2.8267058.1404102389.1550189763-13643044.1550189763](http://forms.act.org/student/stud_req.html?_ga=2.8267058.1404102389.1550189763-13643044.1550189763), or writing to ACT Student Services, 2727 Scott Blvd., minizip 46, P.O. Box 414, Iowa City, IA 52243-0414 or by calling (319) 337-1320.

## HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE SAT OR THE ACT?

**If you're currently incarcerated:**

- Check your facility's library for SAT and ACT test preparation guides and materials.
- The College Board (the company that makes the SAT) offers free sample tests and questions for study preparation. You can request these materials by writing to: College Board SAT Program, P.O. Box 025505, Miami, FL 33102 or by calling SAT Program Customer Service at (866) 756-7346.
- ACT offers a free guide for preparing for the test. You can request a copy by writing to: ACT Student Services, 2727 Scott Blvd., minizip 46, P.O. Box 414, Iowa City, IA 52243-0414 or by calling ACT at (319) 337-1270.
- You can purchase test preparation guides and materials for both tests from approved online vendors such as amazon.com and Barnes & Noble.

**If you're formerly incarcerated:**

- Check your local library for SAT and ACT test preparation guides and materials.
- You can also buy these guides at almost any bookstore and from online retailers such as amazon.com. You can also check used bookstores that may sell previous versions of these guides at a discount. (NOTE: These tests are constantly changed and updated. To make sure that you're studying the right material, do not buy guides that are more than a couple of years out of date.)
- Free SAT resources, including practice tests and questions, are available online at [www.sat.collegeboard.org/practice/](http://www.sat.collegeboard.org/practice/).
- ACT's free test preparation guide is available online at [www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-preparation.html](http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/test-preparation.html).

## LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Letters of recommendation positively describe your character traits, accomplishments, and qualifications, and recommend that you be accepted to a program, school, or job. They can be written by past employers, case managers, supervisors, community leaders, or teachers (but not your family members). They should include each person's relationship to you, company name and job title, and contact information.<sup>124</sup>

## EARNING & TRANSFERRING COLLEGE CREDITS—GOOD OPTIONS IF YOU ARE INCARCERATED

If you completed any Career & Technical Education (CTE) or college-level courses, whether before, during, or after your incarceration, you may be able to apply the credit you earned from those courses toward a CTE certificate or a college degree. This is called "transferring" credits.<sup>125</sup> The new school you enroll in recognizes the work you did previously (either while incarcerated or at your previous school), and does not make you retake those classes in order to earn your degree.<sup>126</sup>

Generally, CTE programs and community colleges will accept credit from correspondence courses or other programs you completed while incarcerated. Four-year colleges and universities may accept some of these

<sup>120</sup> ACT, *Arranged Testing Policies and Procedures*, "ACT reviews arranged testing requests for examinees who qualify under certain conditions such as distance from test centers and confinement to correctional institutions." [www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/arranged.pdf](http://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/arranged.pdf).

<sup>121</sup> Collegeboard, SAT, [collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register](http://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register).

<sup>122</sup> Collegeboard, SAT, THE SAT AND SAT SUBJECT TEST, [collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/pdf/sat-registration-booklet-students.pdf](http://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/pdf/sat-registration-booklet-students.pdf).

<sup>123</sup> THE ACT, [www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/register.html](http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act/register.html).

<sup>124</sup> U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC. OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUC., *Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training You Need* (2012) at 20.

<sup>125</sup> U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC. OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUC., *Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training You Need* (2012) at 39-40; see also MY COLLEGE GUIDE, *Transferring Colleges*, [mycollegeguide.org/guru/15/transferring-colleges](http://mycollegeguide.org/guru/15/transferring-colleges).

<sup>126</sup> U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC. OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUC., *Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training You Need* (2012); COLLEGETRANSFER.NET, *What is College Transfer?*, [www.collegetransfer.net/AskCT/What-is-College-Transfer](http://www.collegetransfer.net/AskCT/What-is-College-Transfer).



credits, depending on the program. Four-year colleges generally accept transfer credits earned at community colleges. Each school will have a different policy for applying transfer credits toward a certificate or degree program.

**NOTE:** Generally, you must have completed the course within the last 10 years and earned a C or better for a school to give you credit for it. Also, you cannot transfer credits from a non-accredited program to an accredited program. (See [PG. 17](#) for information on “accreditation.”)

### HOW CAN I FIND OUT IF MY CREDITS WILL TRANSFER?

The best way to make sure that your credits will transfer to your new school is to call or write to the new school’s Registrar’s Office directly and ask. There are also online resources that may help you find out if and where you can transfer your credits. These include:

- South Carolina’s Transfer and Articulation Center ([www.sctrac.org](http://www.sctrac.org))—shows how credits earned at one public South Carolina college can be applied when transferred to another.
- CollegeTransfer.net ([www.collegetransfer.net](http://www.collegetransfer.net))—walks you through transfer options at all education levels.

### HOW DO I TRANSFER MY CREDITS?

Once you make sure that your credits will transfer to the school you want to attend, the transfer process is simple. When you are applying to your new school, you will need to request your official transcripts from any college or program that you attended in the past, and have them sent to your new school.<sup>127</sup> You must request your official transcripts—the official record of your grades from the school’s administration records. To find out how to request your official transcripts, contact the admissions and records office of the school you attended.

**NOTE:** If you earned college credit while incarcerated, you will need to contact the school that provided the course or program to request a copy of your official transcripts. You do not get them from the facility where you were incarcerated.<sup>128</sup>

## **DISTANCE EDUCATION**

### WHAT IS DISTANCE EDUCATION?

**Distance Education** (also called Distance Learning) is an education program that uses various technologies to deliver instruction to students who are separated from the teacher. It is a way for students to take a formal course of study (high school, vocational, or college-level) without having to travel to the classroom. Although the students and the teachers are separated, the hallmark of Distance Education is regular and substantial interaction between them.<sup>129</sup> Distance Education courses usually incorporate multiple forms of media, including printed materials, CDs or DVDs, audio recordings, telephone communication, audio or video conferencing, email, and Web-casts and Internet streaming. There are two types of Distance Education interaction modes: “synchronous” and “asynchronous” instruction.<sup>130</sup>

### HOW DO THE TWO TYPES OF DISTANCE EDUCATION WORK?

**Synchronous instruction** means that all of the students and the instructor(s) participate in the class at the same time, even though they are not in the same place. This is usually done through “live” teleconferencing, video conferencing, web conferencing, or Internet chats. The class is given at a set time, and everyone calls or logs in at that time to participate. Synchronous courses can offer a level of interactivity similar to that of a traditional face-to-face class.<sup>131</sup>

**Asynchronous instruction** does not require that the student(s) and the instructor(s) participate at the same time. Students choose when they want to study the course materials or interact with the instructor(s). Asynchronous instruction is more flexible than synchronous instruction, but offers less interactivity because it is not “live.” In asynchronous instruction, course materials and communications are often delivered via CDs or DVDs, by traditional mail correspondence, or through e-mails, listservs, and internet downloads.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>127</sup> U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC. OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUC., *Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training You Need* (2012) at 39-40.

<sup>128</sup> Anna Crayton & Nicole Lindahl, *Back to School: A Guide to Continuing Your Education after Prison*, Prisoner Reentry Institute, John Jay College of Criminal Justice (2010) at 40.

<sup>129</sup> 34 C.F.R. § 600.2. See also U.S. Dep’t. of Educ. Fed. Student Aid, Federal Student Aid Handbook 2021-2022, vol. 2, ch. 2 at 44-47.

<sup>130</sup> 34 C.F.R. § 600.2. See U.S. Dep’t. of Educ. Fed. Student Aid, Federal Student Aid Handbook 2021-2022, vol. 2, ch. 2 at 44-47.

<sup>131</sup> UofSC South Carolina, Online Courses, [SC.EDU/STUDY/ACADEMIC\\_OVERVIEW/ONLINE\\_EDUCATION/COURSES/COURSE\\_FORMATS/INDEX.PHP](http://SC.EDU/STUDY/ACADEMIC_OVERVIEW/ONLINE_EDUCATION/COURSES/COURSE_FORMATS/INDEX.PHP).

<sup>132</sup> UofSC South Carolina, Online Courses, [SC.EDU/STUDY/ACADEMIC\\_OVERVIEW/ONLINE\\_EDUCATION/COURSES/COURSE\\_FORMATS/INDEX.PHP](http://SC.EDU/STUDY/ACADEMIC_OVERVIEW/ONLINE_EDUCATION/COURSES/COURSE_FORMATS/INDEX.PHP).



## ARE THERE BENEFITS TO DISTANCE EDUCATION?

PROS:	CONS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Classes and programs are available to students who cannot attend in person</li> <li>Saves students time because they don't have to travel to classes</li> <li>Often cheaper than location-based classes</li> <li>Often offers more flexible scheduling</li> <li>Less likely to be subject to class-size restrictions (i.e. classes available to more students)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less interactivity and support than traditional classroom learning</li> <li>Students must be self-motivated and self-directed</li> <li>Most programs require knowledge of and access to computers, web browsers, email, and word-processing programs</li> <li>Some programs require continuous access to the Internet</li> <li>Students miss out on benefits of classroom attendance, such as getting to know the instructor/other students, and group discussions of views and opinions<sup>133</sup></li> </ul>

**BEWARE:** Distance Education programs can vary in quality and legitimacy (quality of instruction can be low, credits/degrees may not be recognized by other schools or programs). Some programs are outright scams. (For information on how to tell if a program is a scam, see *How To Choose The Educational Path That Meets Your Specific Educational Goals*, PG. 18).

## WHAT CREDENTIALS CAN I EARN THROUGH DISTANCE EDUCATION?

Thanks to the Internet, you can earn pretty much any credential through a Distance Education program that you can earn through a traditional educational program. This includes high school diploma and equivalency certificates, CTE certificates and degrees, associate's and bachelor's degrees, and even graduate academic and professional degrees. Distance Education programs are offered in most major CTE and college degree program areas. Program quality does vary greatly, however.



**WARNING:** While many accredited, reputable schools offer credential programs through Distance Education, there are also plenty of scam programs that will take your money and leave you with a useless piece of paper. (For more information on spotting Distance Education scam programs, see *How To Choose The Educational Path That Meets Your Specific Educational Goals*, PG. 17.)

## HOW DO I FIND AND ENROLL IN A DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAM?

### **If you're currently incarcerated:**

- Ask your Correctional Counselor, or the staff of your facility's education department for information on available programs (Note: Because of the technology requirements of Distance Education programs, they may not be available at your facility);
- Request information on accredited Distance Education programs that may be available to people incarcerated in South Carolina facilities by writing to the South Carolina Department of Education, Adult Education Office, 1429 Senate Street, Columbia, SC 29201 or by calling (803) 734-8500.

### **If you're formerly incarcerated:**

- Check your local public library for information on schools that offer Distance Education programs (these programs have become very popular and are offered to some extent at most schools).
- Check with local community colleges to see if they offer courses through Distance Education.
- Check with SC Works for information about Distance Education programs.
- Check these online resources:
  - South Carolina Remote Learning ([scremotelearning.com](http://scremotelearning.com))—offers a step-by-step guide to Distance Education in South Carolina;
  - South Carolina Department of Education, Adult Education ([ed.sc.gov/instruction/adult-education/](http://ed.sc.gov/instruction/adult-education/));
  - The U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., Database of Accredited Post-Secondary Institutions and Programs at: [ope.ed.gov/dapip/#/home](http://ope.ed.gov/dapip/#/home).
  - The Distance Education Accrediting Commission, Directory of Accredited Institutions at: [www.deac.org](http://www.deac.org).
  - SC Works Online Services Resources at: [jobs.scworks.org/vosnet/Default.aspx](http://jobs.scworks.org/vosnet/Default.aspx)

<sup>133</sup> U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC. OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUC., *Take Charge of Your Future: Get the Education and Training You Need* (2012) at 34.



### ACCREDITATION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

There are numerous commercial websites that advertise hundreds of Distance Education programs and schools in the U.S. and abroad. However, keep in mind that schools and programs pay to be listed on these websites. This means that when you search these sites, only those that have paid will come up—you will not see the rest of the schools and programs out there, so the results of your search will be limited. Also, many of these websites claim that they only list “accredited” schools and programs, however, you should always do your own research to make sure that a school or Distance Education program is 1) legitimate and 2) recognized by an approved accrediting agency.<sup>134</sup> (For more information on accreditation and scam programs, see *How To Choose The Educational Path That Meets Your Specific Educational Goals*, [PG. 17.](#))

### HOW MUCH DO DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMS COST?

The cost of Distance Education programs varies based on the type of program, the delivery media, and the institution that it is offered through. Programs offered through four-year colleges and more prestigious schools will be more expensive than those offered through local community colleges.

#### ***TWO IMPORTANT THINGS TO NOTE ABOUT PAYING FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION:***

##### 1. Distance Education and Fee Waivers

Distance Education programs offered through South Carolina community colleges may qualify for an enrollment fee waiver through the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education’s Fee Waiver program. (For more information on this program and how to qualify, see *Paying For Your Education*, [PG. 45.](#))

##### 2. Distance Education and Financial Aid

You may be able to get financial aid to help you pay for your Distance Education courses. Only accredited Distance Education institutions are allowed to participate in federal financial aid programs. Even if a school or program is eligible to participate, it must choose to do so. To find out if financial aid is available for a particular school or program, check with that institution’s financial aid office (For more information on financial aid, see *Paying For Your Education*, [PG. 45.](#))

### **CORRESPONDENCE COURSES**

A correspondence course is a course offered by a school or program, where the student is separated from the teacher and course materials are provided through the mail or over the Internet. There is very little interaction between the student and the teacher, communication is usually initiated by the student (whenever the student wants), and students work at their own pace. Although there are some similarities, correspondence courses are not considered a type of distance education under federal law (see the table below for key differences).<sup>135</sup>

#### ***THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DISTANCE EDUCATION AND CORRESPONDENCE COURSES***

Although these two terms seem similar and are often confused, they refer to two different learning situations. Distance Education is generally an option that requires Internet access. Although Distance Education is one option to earn credit, due to the need of media/Internet access, it may not be an option for an individual who is currently incarcerated.

Distance Education Courses	Correspondence Courses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses multiple media to deliver content &amp; feedback</li> <li>• Interaction can be synchronous or asynchronous</li> <li>• Interaction between student and teacher is regular and substantial</li> <li>• Courses and assignments follow a set schedule</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction is usually through a single medium</li> <li>• Interaction is only asynchronous</li> <li>• Interaction between student and teacher is limited</li> <li>• Courses and assignments are “self-paced”</li> </ul>

### WHAT CREDENTIALS CAN I EARN THROUGH CORRESPONDENCE COURSES?

Like with Distance Education programs, you can earn pretty much any credential that you can earn through traditional schooling through a correspondence course. This includes high school diploma and equivalency

<sup>134</sup> STUDY PORTALS ONLINE COURSES, [www.distancelearningportal.com](http://www.distancelearningportal.com); see also ONLINE DEGREES PROGRAM, <http://www.onlinedegreeprograms.com>, see also ONLINE SCHOOLS, [www.onlineschools.org](http://www.onlineschools.org).

<sup>135</sup> 34 C.F.R. § 600.2.



certificates, CTE certificates and degrees, associate's and bachelor's degrees, and even graduate academic and professional degrees. Program quality does vary greatly, however. While many accredited schools offer credential programs through correspondence courses, this is where you are most likely to see scam programs offering bogus higher education degrees. (For more information on spotting correspondence course scams, see *How To Choose The Educational Path That Meets Your Specific Educational Goals*, [PG. 17](#)).

### ARE CORRESPONDENCE COURSES RIGHT FOR ME?

PROS:	CONS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are completely flexible and can be worked around any schedule</li> <li>• They are a great way to get a head start on a CTE or college degree by earning college course credits while you are incarcerated</li> <li>• They can be accessed from anywhere, Internet access is not necessary, so they allow you to be less dependent on what your facility offers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You must be entirely self-motivated and self-directed, or you may find it difficult to keep up your momentum and finish the program</li> <li>• You miss out on the benefits of regular interaction with instructors and other students</li> <li>• There is limited support if you are having trouble with a course</li> </ul>

### HOW DO I FIND AND ENROLL IN A CORRESPONDENCE PROGRAM?

#### *If you're currently incarcerated:*

If you are interested in taking a correspondence course while you are incarcerated, your facility's education department should be able to provide information and guidance.

*One great resource for researching correspondence programs from inside is:*

- *Prison Education Guide* by Christopher Zoukis and edited by Susan Schwartzkopf (through Prison Legal News Publishing). This is a comprehensive guide to correspondence programs for incarcerated individuals that includes a detailed analysis of the quality, cost, and course offerings of all college correspondence programs available. The publication costs \$49.95--you can find it at: ([www.prisonlegalnews.org/store/products/prison-education-guide/](http://www.prisonlegalnews.org/store/products/prison-education-guide/)). It is also available from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). You can also write to the publisher for information on ordering the book: Prison Legal News, P.O. Box 1151, Lake Worth Beach, FL 33460.

#### HELPFUL HINT

##### *Student Responsibilities for Correspondence Courses*

If you enroll in a correspondence course while you are incarcerated, you will be responsible for getting all of the required textbooks and materials yourself. You may also be responsible for finding a "proctor" at your institution to administer any midterm or final exams. A proctor is someone who watches over you while you take your exam to make sure that you are the one actually taking the exam, and that you do not cheat.

#### *If you're formerly incarcerated:*

- See the Appendices below for a list of schools known to offer correspondence courses;
- Check your local public library for information on schools that offer correspondence courses;
- Visit SC Works and ask about correspondence programs.

**NOTE:** Once you have returned to the community, you will have access to more resources, including the Internet, than when you were incarcerated. We recommend that you take advantage of interactive Distance Education programs or traditional face-to-face programs, as these tend to offer a richer and more integrated educational experience than correspondence courses.

#### HELPFUL HINT

##### *Paying for Correspondence Courses*

You may be eligible to receive financial aid to pay for your correspondence studies, but it depends on the school you are taking courses through. Because of federal regulations, schools that offer primarily correspondence courses are not eligible to participate in federal financial aid programs. If more than 50% of the courses the institution offers are correspondence courses, or more than 50% of the students enrolled are taking correspondence courses, then the school is not eligible for Federal Financial Aid. Additionally, a school is not eligible if more than 25% of its students are incarcerated.<sup>136</sup> (For more information on financial aid, see *Paying For Your Education*, [PG. 45](#).)

<sup>136</sup> 34 C.F.R. § 600.7.



## **GRADUATE ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMS**

These degrees are offered at four-year colleges and universities and at graduate academic and professional schools. You must have a Bachelor's degree before you can move on to pursue a graduate academic or professional degree. Students studying to earn one of these degrees must take highly advanced and specialized courses in a specific academic or professional field. It generally takes two years of full-time study for a *Master's degree*, and three to four years of full-time study for a *Doctoral degree*.

- Graduate **academic** degree programs require advanced study in an academic field. They emphasize theory, as opposed to practical application, with the goal of contributing to the body of knowledge on a subject. Master of Arts (M.A.) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) are examples of graduate academic degrees.
- Graduate **professional** degree programs require advanced study in professional or vocational fields. They emphasize the practical application of knowledge to a professional practice, and are usually required in order to get a license to work in that profession.<sup>137</sup> Master of Engineering (M.E.) and Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) are examples of graduate professional degrees.

### **WHERE CAN I FIND INFORMATION ABOUT GRADUATE PROGRAMS?**

Your local public library should have various books and guides about graduate academic and professional schools and the programs they offer. These are also available from most book-sellers. You can also contact the alumni services center of the college where you got your undergraduate degree for information and help on searching for and applying to graduate academic and professional schools.

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<sup>137</sup> COLLEGEBOARD, *Quick Guide: Your College Degree Options*, [www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/college-101/quick-guide-your-college-degree-options](http://www.bigfuture.collegeboard.org/find-colleges/college-101/quick-guide-your-college-degree-options).



## V. PAYING FOR YOUR EDUCATION

### HOW WILL I PAY FOR MY EDUCATION?

Here are some things to consider:

- How much money will it take to reach your goals?
- What are the various costs involved, and how can you reduce them?
- What extra challenges might you face because of your criminal history, and how can you address them?
- This chapter will help you think practically about these questions. As the following sections explain, even if you have limited resources, there are ways you can reduce your costs and get help covering your educational expenses.

### WHAT IS FINANCIAL AID?

“Financial aid” is the general term for any type of funding intended to help students pay for educational expenses. This is the most common way that people fund their education.

### WHAT KINDS OF FINANCIAL AID ARE THERE?

There are many different types of financial aid, available from different places. The basic categories are:

- **Borrowed aid**—federal government and private loans;
- **Gift aid**—federal and state grants, waivers, and scholarships;
- **Self-help aid**—federal work study, earned service benefits, other work during school;
- **Specialty aid programs**—military & veteran’s programs, tax benefits, community service awards, foster care youth aid, etc.<sup>138</sup>

### WHERE DOES FINANCIAL AID COME FROM?

The federal government, state governments, organizations, businesses, and agencies offer financial aid of one or more types. Generally, financial aid providers fall into the following broad categories:<sup>139</sup>

- **The Federal Government**—Grants, loans, work-study;
- **The State (South Carolina)**—Grants, loans and loan forgiveness for residents’ in-state education expenses;
- **Individual Schools or Programs**—Grants, loans, & scholarships from the educational institution itself;
- **Nonprofit or Private Organizations**—Scholarships & awards based on many factors, such as merit, achievements, or membership to the group or organization.

These categories of aid are discussed in detail below.

## FEDERAL STUDENT AID

### WHAT KINDS OF FEDERAL STUDENT AID MIGHT BE AVAILABLE TO ME?

Federal student aid is probably the most common type of financial aid that people rely on to help them pay for school. Most federal student aid is offered through the Department of Education.<sup>140</sup> (For detailed information on federal student aid, visit the Federal Student Aid website at: [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov).) Federal student aid includes:

**Federal Grants**—Grants do not have to be repaid unless 1) you drop out of school, or 2) your GPA (grade point average) falls below a certain minimum (usually specified in the grant).

- **Federal Pell Grant**—This is the largest grant program available in the United States. Grants are awarded based on financial need.
- **Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)**—This grant is a supplement to the Pell Grant. Priority for FSEOGs must be given to those students who also will receive a Federal Pell Grant, but need more aid. The government gives a set amount of money to the schools that want to participate in the program, and the schools then give this grant to the students who have the most financial need.<sup>141</sup>

**Federal Loans**—These are loans made to you by the federal government. They usually have lower interest rates and more flexible repayment options than regular loans. The amount you are allowed to borrow depends on the cost of the school you want to go to, your financial need, and what other aid you may have gotten. Since these are loans, you will have to pay the money back!

- **Direct Loan**—The U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC. lends you the money directly.

<sup>138</sup> U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC. FEDERAL STUDENT AID, [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov).

<sup>139</sup> U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC. FEDERAL STUDENT AID, [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov).

<sup>140</sup> U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC., [www.ed.gov](https://www.ed.gov).

<sup>141</sup> U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC. FEDERAL STUDENT AID, *Federal grants are money to help pay for college or career school.* [studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships](https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships).



- **Federal Perkins Loan**—A school-based loan program where the school lends you money if you show exceptional financial need.<sup>142</sup>

**Federal Work-Study**—Work-study allows you to earn money through part-time employment (on or off campus) while you are in school. If you are awarded work-study aid, you are guaranteed to earn a certain amount of work-study funds as long as you have a work-study approved job (however, you cannot earn more than that amount).<sup>143</sup>

**Other federal student aid programs outside of the Department of Education include:**

- Aid for serving in the military or for being the spouse or child of a veteran ([studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/military](https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/military));
- Tax benefits for education ([www.irs.gov/newsroom/tax-benefits-for-education-information-center](https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/tax-benefits-for-education-information-center));
- Educational Awards for community service with AmeriCorps ([americorps.gov/members-volunteers/education-award-faqs](https://americorps.gov/members-volunteers/education-award-faqs));
- Education and Training Vouchers for current and former foster care youth ([dss.sc.gov/child-well-being/foster-care/chafeetv-program-independent-living/etv-program/](https://dss.sc.gov/child-well-being/foster-care/chafeetv-program-independent-living/etv-program/));
- Scholarships and loan repayment through the Department of Health and Human Services;
- Indian Health Service Loan Repayment ([www.ihs.gov/loanrepayment/](https://www.ihs.gov/loanrepayment/));
- National Institutes of Health Loan Repayment ([www.lrp.nih.gov/eligibility-programs](https://www.lrp.nih.gov/eligibility-programs));
- National Health Services Corp Loan Repayment ([nhsc.hrsa.gov/loan-repayment/nhsc-loan-repayment-program](https://nhsc.hrsa.gov/loan-repayment/nhsc-loan-repayment-program)).

**WILL MY CRIMINAL HISTORY AFFECT MY ABILITY TO GET FEDERAL STUDENT AID?**

Maybe. It depends on the circumstances of your offense, the type of aid you are applying for, and your incarceration status. The following is a summary of the possible implications of a criminal record on your federal student aid eligibility.

**Drug Convictions:**

Drug convictions no longer affect your federal student aid eligibility. When you complete the FAFSA, you will be asked whether you had a drug conviction for an offense that occurred while you were receiving federal student aid. If the answer is yes, complete the worksheet provided. Answering yes and completing the worksheet will not impact your eligibility.<sup>144</sup>

**Sex Offense Convictions:**

If you have been convicted of a forcible or non-forcible sex offense and you are subject to an involuntary civil commitment after your incarceration for that offense, you are ineligible to receive a Federal Pell Grant.<sup>145</sup> However, you are still eligible for other types of federal student aid.

**Currently Incarcerated:**

Unfortunately, while you are incarcerated, you are directly prohibited from getting certain kinds of federal aid (by law), and indirectly banned from some of the others (by logistics). However, once you are released, most of these restrictions are lifted and you become eligible to receive all forms of federal aid. You can even apply before your release so that your aid will be ready by the time you start school.<sup>146</sup>

**Selective Service:**

Unless you are exempt, you may not be eligible for state financial aid if you did not register for the Selective Service.<sup>147</sup>



**IMPORTANT: If you're incarcerated, do not fill out the FAFSA unless you know you are going to be released in time to attend school *that same year*. FAFSA information is only good for one year. (Everyone who applies for federal student aid must complete a new FAFSA every year.)**

<sup>142</sup> FEDERAL STUDENT AID, U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *The Federal Perkins Loan Program provided money for college or career school for students with financial need.*, [studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/loans/perkins](https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/loans/perkins).

<sup>143</sup> FEDERAL STUDENT AID, U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *Federal Work-Study jobs help students earn money to pay for college or career school.*, [studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/work-study](https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/types/work-study).

<sup>144</sup> FEDERAL STUDENT AID, U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *Students with criminal convictions have limited eligibility for federal student aid.*, [studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions](https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions).

<sup>145</sup> FEDERAL STUDENT AID, U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *Students with criminal convictions have limited eligibility for federal student aid.*, [studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions](https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions).

<sup>146</sup> FEDERAL STUDENT AID, U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *Students with criminal convictions have limited eligibility for federal student aid.*, [studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions](https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions).

<sup>147</sup> SELECTIVE SERV. SYS., *Benefits and Penalties*, [www.sss.gov/register/benefits-and-penalties/](https://www.sss.gov/register/benefits-and-penalties/).



### **On Parole or Probation**

You are free to apply for all forms of federal student aid, including those you couldn't get while you were incarcerated. However, the sex offense restrictions still apply (see above).<sup>148</sup>

### **CAN I GET FEDERAL STUDENT AID WHILE I'M INCARCERATED?**

It depends on what institution you are in, and what it offers, so keep reading this section to better understand your eligibility for federal grants and federal loans. Most of the educational programs available to you while you are incarcerated are either free or do not qualify for financial aid in the first place. But remember, while you cannot *receive* most financial aid while you are incarcerated, you can still *apply* for financial aid so that the money is waiting for you when you get out.<sup>149</sup>

### **AM I ELIGIBLE FOR FEDERAL *GRANTS* WHILE I'M INCARCERATED?**

The 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act included a provision that restored Pell Grant eligibility to incarcerated individuals and established participation requirements for prison education programs. Incarcerated students were prohibited from accessing Pell Grants under the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. The allowed costs associated with attendance for incarcerated students, are expanded to include not only tuition, fees, books, and supplies, but course materials, equipment, and the cost of obtaining a license, certification, or a first professional credential. The Secretary of Education can implement Pell Grant-eligible prison education programs before (but not later than) July 1, 2023.<sup>150</sup>

In 2015, the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE) launched a new federal program called the “*Second Chance Pell Pilot Program*,” which allows some incarcerated people to receive Federal Pell Grants to cover much of the costs associated with college (tuition, fees, books, and supplies) while incarcerated. Before this announcement, currently incarcerated people in state and federal facilities were NOT able to receive Federal Pell Grants. The “Second Chance Pilot Pell Program” focuses on those who are eligible for release, especially students who are likely to be released within five years of getting their college education. The program is available only at participating state and federal correctional facilities. Since 2015, over 22,000 individuals in state and federal prisons have participated in the “Second Chance Pilot Pell Program”.<sup>151</sup> Claflin University in Orangeburg, South Carolina, is a Second Chance Pell Institution, which can offer individuals who are incarcerated access to a college education, through a Prison Education Program at a correctional institution.<sup>152</sup>

**NOTE:** Federal Work-Study (FWS) and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG)—Federal law does not prohibit students confined in adult correctional and juvenile justice facilities from receiving FWS and FSEOG, however, you probably won't be able to receive either type of aid. It's not possible for a student to perform an FWS job while incarcerated in an adult correctional facility or juvenile justice facility; and the amount of FSEOG funds available to schools is limited.

### **AM I ELIGIBLE FOR FEDERAL *STUDENT LOANS* WHILE I AM INCARCERATED?**

It depends where you are incarcerated. Anyone who is considered “incarcerated” in a federal or state facility cannot receive federal student loans.<sup>153</sup>

Unfortunately, here, **you are considered “incarcerated”** if you are serving a sentence in a penitentiary, prison, jail, reformatory, work farm, or similar correctional institution, whether it is operated by the government or a private contractor. You are also considered to be incarcerated if you have been committed to a juvenile detention facility.

**You are NOT considered incarcerated** if you are in a halfway house, on home detention, sentenced to serve only on weekends, or if you are confined while your case is still pending (such as while you are awaiting trial).

<sup>148</sup> FEDERAL STUDENT AID, U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *Students with criminal convictions have limited eligibility for federal student aid.*, [studentaid.gov/understandaid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions](https://studentaid.gov/understandaid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions).

<sup>149</sup> FEDERAL STUDENT AID, U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *Students with criminal convictions have limited eligibility for federal student aid.*, [studentaid.gov/understandaid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions](https://studentaid.gov/understandaid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions).

<sup>150</sup> NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS (NASFAA), APPROPRIATIONS ACT RESTORES PELL ELIGIBILITY TO INCARCERATED STUDENTS, ESTABLISHES ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES FOR PRISON EDUCATION PROGRAM, [www.nasfaa.org/news-item/24541/appropriations-act-restores-pell-eligibility-to-incarcerated-students-establishes-eligibility-guidelines-for-prison-education-program](https://www.nasfaa.org/news-item/24541/appropriations-act-restores-pell-eligibility-to-incarcerated-students-establishes-eligibility-guidelines-for-prison-education-program).

<sup>151</sup> U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *U.S. Department of Education Announces It Will Expand the Second Chance Pell Experiment for the 2022-2023 Award Year*, [www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-announces-it-will-expand-second-chance-pell-experiment-2022-2023-award-year](https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/us-department-education-announces-it-will-expand-second-chance-pell-experiment-2022-2023-award-year). See also, SECOND CHANCE PELL FACT SHEET, [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oep/pell-secondchance.pdf](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oep/pell-secondchance.pdf).

<sup>152</sup> CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY, *Claflin University Awarded Second Chance Pell Grant By the U.S. Department of Education*, <https://www.claflin.edu/news-events/news/2020/05/15/ciaflin-university-awarded-second-chance-pell-grant-by-the-u.s.-department-of-education>.

<sup>153</sup> FEDERAL STUDENT AID, U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *Students with criminal convictions have limited eligibility for federal student aid.*, [studentaid.gov/understandaid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions](https://studentaid.gov/understandaid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions).



THE FOLLOWING CHART SUMMARIZES WHETHER OR NOT YOU CAN RECEIVE FEDERAL STUDENT GRANTS AND/OR FEDERAL STUDENT LOANS WHILE YOU ARE INCARCERATED.

<b>IF YOU ARE IN A FEDERAL OR STATE INSTITUTION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You <u>CANNOT</u> get federal student loans while incarcerated.</li> <li>You can get a Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) and Federal Work-Study (FWS), but it is unlikely because the amount of FSEOG funds available to schools is limited and the logistical difficulties of performing an FWS job while incarcerated would likely be too great for you to be awarded FWS funds.</li> <li>As of September 2015, under a new federal program by the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE) called the “<i>Second Chance Pell Pilot Program</i>,” you <b>MAY</b> be able to receive federal Pell Grants to cover many of the costs associated with college (tuition, fees, books, and supplies) while incarcerated. Before this announcement, currently incarcerated people in state and federal facilities were <b>NOT</b> able to receive Federal Pell Grants.</li> <li>The 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act included a provision that restored Pell Grant eligibility to incarcerated individuals.</li> </ul>
<b>IF YOU ARE IN AN INSTITUTION OTHER THAN A FEDERAL OR STATE ONE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You <b>CANNOT</b> get federal student loans.</li> <li>You can get a Federal Pell Grant.</li> <li>You can get FSEOG and FWS, but you probably won’t because schools are limited in the amount of FSEOG funds available, and because the logistical difficulties of performing an FWS job while incarcerated would likely be too great for you to be awarded FWS funds.</li> </ul>

Once you’re released, most eligibility limitations will be removed. In fact, you may apply for aid before you’re released so your aid is processed in time for you to start school. However, if you are subject to an involuntary civil commitment for a sexual offense, your eligibility may be limited.

**REMEMBER:** Even though you are not eligible to receive federal student loans while you are incarcerated, you can still apply for them so that your application can be processed and they will be available in time for you to start school once you are released. (For information on applying for federal student aid, see [PG. 45](#). The application process is the same whether you are incarcerated or not.)



**IMPORTANT:** If you’re incarcerated, you should not fill out the FAFSA unless you know you are going to be released in time to attend school *that year*. FAFSA information is only good for one year. Everyone who applies for federal student aid must complete a new FAFSA every year. This means that if you were receiving federal financial aid before you were incarcerated, you will likely need to reapply, unless you will be released before that school year ends.

#### AM I ELIGIBLE FOR *FEDERAL WORK-STUDY (FWS)* WHILE I AM INCARCERATED?

Technically, yes, but in reality, no. While you are technically eligible for FWS while you are incarcerated, logistics alone will likely prevent you from being awarded this type of aid. It is difficult, if not impossible, for you to perform an FWS job while incarcerated.<sup>154</sup>

#### CAN I GET FEDERAL STUDENT AID WHILE I AM ON PAROLE OR PROBATION?

Once you are released, you become fully eligible for federal student aid again. Your status on parole, probation, or under any other type of supervision does not affect your eligibility. However, any general restrictions based on your conviction history (sex offenses) still apply.<sup>155</sup>

#### CAN I GET FEDERAL STUDENT AID WHILE I LIVE IN SUBSIDIZED HOUSING?

Probably not. For one thing, the federal government limits ALL students’ ability to receive Section 8 Housing unless they meet certain exceptions, such as having a disability or living with parents who are otherwise eligible for public housing.<sup>156</sup> In addition, financial assistance — including federal student aid — that exceeds

<sup>154</sup> FEDERAL STUDENT AID, U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC., *Students with criminal convictions have limited eligibility for federal student aid*, [studentaid.gov/understandaid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions](https://studentaid.gov/understandaid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions).

<sup>155</sup> FEDERAL STUDENT AID, U.S. DEP’T OF EDUC., *Students with criminal convictions have limited eligibility for federal student aid*, [studentaid.gov/understandaid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions](https://studentaid.gov/understandaid/eligibility/requirements/criminal-convictions).

<sup>156</sup> FEDERAL REGISTER, THE DAILY JOURNAL OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, *Eligibility of Independent Students for Assisted Housing Under Section 8 of the U.S. Housing Act of 1937*; [www.federalregister.gov/documents/2005/12/30/05-24672/eligibility-of-students-for-assisted-housing-under-section-8-of-the-us-housing-act-of-1937](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2005/12/30/05-24672/eligibility-of-students-for-assisted-housing-under-section-8-of-the-us-housing-act-of-1937).



the cost of tuition is considered income for purposes of evaluating a person's eligibility for subsidized housing.<sup>157</sup> The amount of aid you receive may place you outside of the income bracket necessary for Section 8 Housing.

## HOW DO I APPLY FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID?

Everyone who applies for federal student financial aid must start by filling out the Free Application for Student Aid (FAFSA). Not only does the FAFSA give you access to federal student aid (the largest source of financial aid), but most states and individual schools also use the FAFSA to determine what state or school-based financial aid you may be eligible for.

- If you have internet access, you can fill out the FAFSA application online at: [studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid](https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid);
- If you want to fill out the paper version, you can get the form from most local public libraries or from the financial aid office of the school you want to attend; and
- You can also call the Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC): 1 (800) 4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243) to request a copy.

## WHAT INFORMATION WILL I NEED TO FILL OUT THE FAFSA?

The FAFSA asks you for personal information such as your name, date of birth, and address, as well as information about your financial situation. Some of the information and documents you may need are:<sup>158</sup>

- Your social security number;
- Your driver's license number (if you have one);
- Your Alien Registration number if you are not a U.S. citizen (For a full list of eligible noncitizens, visit [studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/non-us-citizens](https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/non-us-citizens)).
- Federal tax information or tax returns including IRS W-2 information;
- Records of any untaxed income, such as child support received, interest income, and veteran's non-education benefits that you received in the last year;
- Information on cash; savings and checking account balances; investments, including stocks and bonds and real estate (but not the home you live in); and business and farm assets.

## WHEN SHOULD I APPLY FOR FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID?

To be considered for federal student aid, you can complete a *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) form between October 1 and June 30. Each state and every individual school have its own deadline by which it must receive FAFSA information in order to include federal funds in the financial aid package that it offers you.

**IMPORTANT: If you're incarcerated, you should not fill out the FAFSA unless you know you are going to be released in time to attend school that year. FAFSA information is only good for one year. (Everyone applying for federal student aid must complete a new FAFSA yearly.)**

## I ALREADY HAVE STUDENT LOANS, CAN MY STUDENT LOANS BE DEFERRED WHILE I AM INCARCERATED?

Yes, you can have your loans deferred, but you must apply for a deferment. Deferment is a process that permits you to temporarily put your loan payments on hold, depending on your loan provider and circumstances.

- If you have: Federal Perkins Loans then contact the school that made your loan or the school's servicing agent.
- If you have: Direct Loans, Direct PLUS Loans, FFEL Consolidation Loans or FFEL Plus Loans, then contact your loan servicer, which is the company assigned to handle billing and others services associated with your federal student loan ([studentaid.gov/manage-loans/repayment/servicers](https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/repayment/servicers)).<sup>159</sup>

### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FOREBEARANCE AND DEFERMENT?

A forbearance is a period in which your payments are temporarily suspended or reduced due to certain financial hardships. During a forbearance, interest continues to accrue.

A deferment is similar to a forbearance in that it temporarily postpones payments under certain circumstances. Interest generally does not accrue on subsidized federal loans or Federal Perkins Loans. All other federal loans will continue to accrue interest.

<sup>157</sup> FEDERAL REGISTER, THE DAILY JOURNAL OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, *Eligibility of Independent Students for Assisted Housing Under Section 8 of the U.S. Housing Act of 1937*; [www.federalregister.gov/documents/2005/12/30/05-24672/eligibility-of-students-for-assisted-housing-under-section-8-of-the-us-housing-act-of-1937](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2005/12/30/05-24672/eligibility-of-students-for-assisted-housing-under-section-8-of-the-us-housing-act-of-1937).

<sup>158</sup> FEDERAL STUDENT AID, U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *You know you have to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form, but maybe you're not sure what to do.* [studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/filling-out](https://studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/filling-out).

<sup>159</sup> FEDERAL STUDENT AID, U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *Get Temporary Relief*, [studentaid.gov/manage-loans/lower-payments/get-temporary-relief](https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/lower-payments/get-temporary-relief).



If you cannot get in touch with your student loan provider, you can ask a trusted person on the outside to send you the necessary forms for deferment from your loan provider. Ask the prison staff for proof of your incarceration so you can provide that to the loan providers along with the other paperwork.

### **I WAS RECEIVING FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID WHEN I WAS INCARCERATED, MY LOANS WENT INTO DEFAULT. WHAT CAN I DO?**

Start by calling your federal loan provider. A representative may be able to talk you through your options. Most likely, you will have to rehabilitate your loan, which requires you to make nine consecutive monthly payments.<sup>160</sup> If you are currently incarcerated, that payment may be as low as \$5.<sup>161</sup>

Once you have successfully rehabilitated your loan, you can apply for an income-driven repayment plan, which lets you pay off your loans using a portion of your income. If you are currently incarcerated, you may not have any monthly payments at all.<sup>162</sup>

## **SOUTH CAROLINA STATE STUDENT AID**

### **WHAT KINDS OF STATE-BASED STUDENT AID MIGHT BE AVAILABLE TO ME?**

- **South Carolina Palmetto Assistance Loan**—This is a group that provides private loans to students. They are a non-profit organization.<sup>163</sup>
- **South Carolina Commission on Higher Education**—This website offers a list of available South Carolina State assistance programs: [www.che.sc.gov/Students,FamiliesMilitary/PayingForCollege/FinancialAssistanceAvailable/OtherFinancialAidInformationforSCResidents.aspx](http://www.che.sc.gov/Students,FamiliesMilitary/PayingForCollege/FinancialAssistanceAvailable/OtherFinancialAidInformationforSCResidents.aspx)
- **South Carolina College and Financial Directory** at [www.sciway.net/finaid.html](http://www.sciway.net/finaid.html), provides a list of South Carolina funded aid, grants, programs, and scholarships.

### **WILL MY CRIMINAL HISTORY DISQUALIFY ME FROM STATE-BASED STUDENT AID?**

Maybe. You cannot receive a South Carolina grant or scholarship if you have ever been convicted of a felony or any second or subsequent alcohol/drug related misdemeanor offense. A high school or college student who has been adjudicated delinquent or has been convicted of a second or subsequent alcohol or drug-related misdemeanor offense, nevertheless shall be eligible or continue to be eligible after the expiration of one academic year from the date of the adjudication or conviction.

### **HOW DO I APPLY FOR STATE-BASED STUDENT AID?**

In order to apply for South Carolina-based financial aid, you will need to fill out the FAFSA (see above). For detailed instructions on how to apply for state-based financial aid in South Carolina, visit the South Carolina's Commission on Higher Education's website at: [www.che.sc.gov/](http://www.che.sc.gov/), or speak to a counselor in your school's financial aid office.

## **SCHOOL-BASED FINANCIAL AID**

### **WHAT KINDS OF SCHOOL-BASED AID MIGHT BE AVAILABLE TO ME?**

Many colleges and universities have their own financial aid programs and may offer scholarships, grants, loans, or work-study programs directly. Eligibility for school-based aid programs can be based on financial need, merit, or a variety of other qualifications. You should contact the financial aid offices of the schools you are interested in to find out what financial aid might be available from the individual schools. Some schools have more financial aid funding available and may be able to offer you a more substantial award. This may be an important factor in your decision about which school you want to attend.

### **WILL MY CRIMINAL HISTORY DISQUALIFY ME FROM SCHOOL-BASED AID?**

Again, policies for receiving school-based financial aid vary by school. Each school has its own requirements for the different types of aid it offers. Remember, even if your criminal history disqualifies you for some types of aid, you may still be eligible for others, so it is important to ask.

<sup>160</sup> FEDERAL STUDENT AID, U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC., *Don't get discouraged if you're in default on your federal student loan.* [studentaid.gov/manage-loans/default/get-out](http://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/default/get-out).

<sup>161</sup> Code of Federal Regulations, 34 C.F.R. § 682.405.

<sup>162</sup> Code of Federal Regulations 20 C.F.R. § 1098E.

<sup>163</sup> SOUTH CAROLINA STUDENT LOAN, *Palmetto Assistance Loan (PAL)*, [www.sctstudentloan.org/school-loans/palmetto-assistance-loan-pal](http://www.sctstudentloan.org/school-loans/palmetto-assistance-loan-pal).



## **SCHOLARSHIPS**

### **WHAT KINDS OF SCHOLARSHIPS MIGHT BE AVAILABLE TO ME?**

Many private organizations offer scholarships, usually to students meeting certain qualifications or having certain characteristics. Such scholarships may be need-based or merit-based (e.g., requiring high GPA or test scores). They may also be based on cultural, religious, ethnic, racial, national identity, political, religious, or other beliefs, or based on your chosen academic or career field.

### **HOW DO I FIND AND APPLY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS?**

The best place to start is the financial aid office at the school you plan on attending. The financial aid counselors on staff can help you search for scholarships that you may qualify for.

Other resources for information on scholarships include:

- Catalogs, such as Scholarships, Fellowships, and Loans and Peterson's Scholarships and Loans for Adult Learners, which can be found at your public library.
- The following websites offer information on many types of scholarships:
  - U.S. DEP'T OF EDUC.: [studentaid.gov](http://studentaid.gov)
  - College Board: [bigfuture.collegeboard.org](http://bigfuture.collegeboard.org)
  - Edvisors: [www.edvisors.com](http://www.edvisors.com)
  - Fastweb: [www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)
  - FinAid: [www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)
  - Go College: [www.gocollege.com](http://www.gocollege.com)
  - Sallie Mae Scholarship Service: [www.salliemae.com](http://www.salliemae.com)
  - Scholarships.com: [www.scholarships.com](http://www.scholarships.com)

**NOTE ON SCHOLARSHIPS:** Be creative when you search for scholarships. They are awarded for all kinds of reasons and can be based on almost any criteria. Often funders do not even advertise that they offer them. You may even find scholarships specifically targeted at helping currently and formerly incarcerated people pursue higher education!<sup>164</sup>

### **WILL MY CRIMINAL HISTORY DISQUALIFY ME FROM SCHOLARSHIPS?**

Not necessarily. Most scholarship applications do not ask for criminal history information. So, as long as you qualify for the scholarship otherwise, your criminal record should not be a factor in whether or not you can get it. If a scholarship application does ask for your criminal history, there's usually no harm in applying anyway, and it won't affect any other scholarships you apply for.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

Getting an education is probably the single-most important gift you can give yourself. It will open doors for you and help secure a future that is stable and rewarding—both financially and personally. In this chapter, we hope you learned practical steps that can help you along your educational path. We hope that we have inspired you to step onto that path with confidence and enthusiasm!

<sup>164</sup> For example, an organization called the Transcending Through Education Foundation (TTF) in Rhode Island offers up to \$1,000 scholarships for people who are currently incarcerated or recently released from Rhode Island DEP'T of Corrections facilities to pursue a higher education degree, [www.transcendingthrougheducation.org](http://www.transcendingthrougheducation.org).



## ***EDUCATION APPENDIX***

APPENDIX A. List of Organizations that may provide GED Materials and other books to Currently Incarcerated People - [PG. 53](#)



## APPENDIX A

### List of Organizations that may provide GED Materials and other books to Currently Incarcerated People

**NOTE:** Some facilities only accept brand new books by mail, sent directly from a bookstore or publisher. Because some of the organizations listed below send used books, you should double check your facility's policy before requesting GED materials.

#### Asheville Prison Book Program

c/o Downtown Books and News  
67 N Lexington Ave  
Asheville, NC 28801  
[avlpb.org](http://avlpb.org)

#### Books for Prisoners San Diego

c/o Groundwork Books Collective  
0323 UCSD Old Student Center  
San Diego, CA 92037  
Email: [groundworkbookscollective@gmail.com](mailto:groundworkbookscollective@gmail.com)  
[groundworkbooks.wixsite.com/collective](http://groundworkbooks.wixsite.com/collective)

#### NYC Books Through Bars

c/o Bluestockings Bookstore  
116 Suffolk Street  
New York, NY 10002  
[booksthroughbarsnyc.org](http://booksthroughbarsnyc.org)

#### Books To Prisoners

c/o Left Bank Books  
92 Pike St., Box A  
Seattle, WA 98101  
[www.bookstoprisoners.net](http://www.bookstoprisoners.net)

#### DC Books to Prisons

PO Box 34190  
Washington, DC 20043  
[dcbookstoprisoners.org/](http://dcbookstoprisoners.org/)

#### Prison Book Program

c/o Lucy Parsons Bookstore  
1306 Hancock Street, Suite 100  
Quincy, MA 02169  
[prisonbookprogram.org](http://prisonbookprogram.org)

#### Portland Books To Prisoners

c/o Education Without Borders  
1414 N Ainsworth St  
Portland, OR 97217  
Email: [pdxbookstoprisoners@riseup.net](mailto:pdxbookstoprisoners@riseup.net)  
[www.ewobglobal.net/portland-books-to-prisoners](http://www.ewobglobal.net/portland-books-to-prisoners)

#### Prison Literature Project

c/o Bound Together Books  
1369 Haight St.  
San Francisco, CA 94117  
[www.prisonlit.org](http://www.prisonlit.org)

#### The Prison Library Project

The Prison Library Project  
c/o the Claremont Forum  
586 W. 1st St.  
Claremont, CA 91711  
[www.prisonlibraryproject.org](http://www.prisonlibraryproject.org)

#### Women's Prison Book Project

3751 17th Ave S  
Minneapolis, MN 55407  
Email: [womensprisonbookproject@gmail.com](mailto:womensprisonbookproject@gmail.com)  
[wpbp.org](http://wpbp.org)

